

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

**13TH JANUARY 2020, AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors M. Thompson (Chairman), J. Till (Vice-Chairman), S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, M. Glass, C.A. Hotham, R. J. Hunter, A. D. Kriss, M. Middleton, P. M. McDonald and C. J. Spencer

Observers: Councillor K. J. May, Councillor S. A. Webb and Councillor G. N. Denaro

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering, Mr O. Paparega, Mr. D. Allen, Ms. A. Delahunty, Ms. A. Scarce and Mrs J Gresham.

69/19      **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies were received from Cllr. A. Beaumont with Cllr. M. Middleton attending as his substitute.

70/19      **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

Councillor R. Hunter declared a pecuniary interest due to his employment at a social housing organisation. It was decided that Councillor R. Hunter would not need to be exempt from the discussion.

There were no other declarations of interest nor of any whipping arrangements.

71/19      **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 2ND DECEMBER 2019**

Cllr R. Hunter requested that the minutes from the previous meeting reflect that his apologies were received and Officers notified that Cllr. S. Hughes had attended as a substitute.

Cllr R. Hunter also requested the Safer Roads item be put back on to the Work Programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019 be approved as a true record.

72/19

**HOMELESSNESS GRANT AND FLEXIBLE HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT GRANT AWARDS - PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Chairman welcomed the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Well-Being, Strategic Housing Manager and the Strategic Housing Officer to the meeting.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Well-Being introduced the report and invited Members to volunteer at the homelessness walkabout which would take place in early March 2020.

The Strategic Housing Manager summarised the report and in particular noted the following:

- Homelessness was a potential problem in the District as it was nationwide.
- There would be three funding streams available to help the District's homelessness issue; Homelessness Grant Allocation, Flexible Homelessness and the Homelessness Reduction Act New Burdens Funding.
- There needed to be an update in paragraph 3.6 and table to clarify the difference between the £206,212 mentioned in paragraph 3.6 and £228,247 total in the table.

Following the presentation, officers discussed a number of areas with the Members in more detail, this included:

- Unallocated funds would be carried forward and contribute to a Crash Pad.
- Provision of furniture for the homeless and rough sleepers and guidance regarding health issues and work force skills.
- Bromsgrove District Housing Trust had a fantastic team but missed the support of the Worcestershire County Council funding which had been withdrawn.

Cllr C. Hotham suggested that officers make contact with a charitable organisation in his ward that work with the homeless and rough sleepers and offer work opportunities in their furniture showrooms and workshops.

Cllr. P McDonald questioned the officers regarding the allocations of the Homelessness Grant Allocation including the following:

- Whether some of the additional service posts were funded jointly - officers confirmed that this was the case.
- Whether officers regularly monitored the contracts managed by other organisations - officers confirmed that this was the case and that officers held quarterly meetings to ensure the contract and budgets were on track.
- Whether Redditch Basement Project received funding from Bromsgrove District Council - officers confirmed that this was not the case and each were funded separately and would provide information regarding the allocation of this project to Members outside of the meeting.

Officers explained to the Members that there was regular reporting on homeless performance and clarified the length of stay (up to 2 years) in temporary accommodation which may be subject to change in the future (up to 18 months).

**RECOMMENDED** that this Board make a statement recognising the following:

“that homelessness and rough sleeping are an issue in the District and hope that the Homelessness Grant and Flexible Homelessness Support Grant Awards will help to eradicate homelessness and rough sleeping in the District. We are also concerned with the way that homelessness and rough sleepers are only counted on one night a year”.

73/19

### **NORTH WORCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY - PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Chairman welcomed the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, the Town Centre and Strategic Partnerships and the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration - North Worcestershire from North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) to the meeting.

The Head of Economic Development and Regeneration-North Worcestershire summarised the report and in particular noted the following:

- The key strategic priorities held within the report.
- Good talent pool available in North Worcestershire compared to the West Midlands.

- Price of land in Bromsgrove means that there was a disparity between supply and demand and that in two and a half months there would be no available office space in Bromsgrove if the supply was not increased to meet the current demand.
- There were businesses that would like to move to the area but there was no land available for them to re-locate to in the District.
- The importance of the Town Centre in Bromsgrove in being the link to bringing people together.

Following the presentation, Members discussed in detail a number of areas with the report including questioning whether Bromsgrove should have its own strategy rather than being incorporated into a wider North Worcestershire strategy.

Cllr. P. McDonald queried with officers the percentage of manufacturing that took place in the district compared to other industries and what was being done in order to bring manufacturing back to the area. Officers explained that because of the nature of the industry that manufacturing sites needed a large site and due to the lack of available land this was a challenge.

There was a detailed discussion regarding the building of 1000 new houses and the creation of 500 new jobs across the region. Members were concerned that the number of jobs to be created in the District was not what they would expect given the number of houses being built. Officers explained that these figures were based on estimates from existing projects and did not include any projects that may emerge in the future.

The following issues were also discussed in detail, this included the following:

- The difference between Local Development Orders (LDOs) and Enterprise Zones.
- Connectivity between railway station and Bromsgrove Town Centre is absolutely vital.
- Strategy in regards to Bromsgrove is confusing as there seemed to be focus on Redditch and Wyre Forest.

**RESOLVED** that

the North Worcestershire Economic Growth Strategy be noted.

74/19

## **MARKET HALL SITE - MEANWHILE USE - PRE-SCRUTINY**

The Chairman once again invited the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, the Town Centre and Strategic Partnerships and the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration-North Worcestershire to the present their report to the Board.

There were three options offered for consideration by the Board. Most Members were enthusiastic about the options but there were concerns that there could be other options that had not been explored but were possible alternatives to those options put forward. These options included:

- Free car parking to encourage more shoppers to the Bromsgrove Town Centre; and
- Make no changes.

Members discussed at length the possibility that the pop-ups could be a permanent fixture rather than a temporary solution. This was taken to the vote and was passed with the following recommendation.

**RECOMMENDED** that option 1 – Bird Box of high quality is approved with the caveat that Cabinet reconsider the temporary nature of the project and make it a permanent feature on the Market Hall site.

75/19

## **FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE**

The Chairman advised that the Working Group had met once since the last meeting and considered the Budget Settlement Update report regarding the Development of Bromsgrove Heat Network. The Council's Climate Change Officer presented the report and the report would be presented at Cabinet on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020. Two recommendations to Cabinet were made.

They were:

- a) that Members are supportive of the initiative but would like to have an indication of what funds the other bodies (Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust and Bromsgrove District Housing Trust) were planning to contribute before committing to the full £75k; and
- b) that as part of the feasibility study alternative sites, owned by the Council, be investigated and considered

Also discussed was the Medium Term Financial Plan Update Report and it was agreed that the Heads of Service would attend the next Finance and Budget Working Group on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

**RESOLVED** that the Finance and Budget Working Group update be noted.

76/19

### **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP - UPDATE**

There were no updates for this item.

77/19

### **TOPIC PROPOSALS**

Members were advised that two Topic Proposal Forms had been received to be considered by Members.

#### Topic Proposal – Worcestershire County Council Local Transport Plan

Councillor S. Colella presented a topic proposal form which detailed The Worcestershire Local Transport Plan and the effect of the Worcestershire County Council Local Transport Plan upon the Bromsgrove District.

During consideration of this topic proposal form Members discussed the following points:

- that no plans had been finalised and so a Task Group would be premature.
- Not all of the information was available.

Following further debate it was

**RESOLVED** that

a Task Group would not currently be established in regards to this Topic Proposal, but the topic would remain on the Board's Work Programme.

#### Topic Proposal – Impact of Library Service Changes Topic Proposal

Councillor S. Colella presented a topic proposal form which detailed the Impact of Library Service Changes before the end of the consultation period at Worcestershire County Council.

The aim of the task group would be to review the outcome of the consultation and the implications for Library services across the district of Bromsgrove

During consideration of this topic proposal form Members discussed the following points:

- That an announcement was only 10-12 weeks away so this Task Group may not be needed.
- Members would like more certainty around the closures of certain libraries as there was some confusion between a statement made by the Member of Parliament and information from the Place Partnership.

Following further debate it was

**RESOLVED** that

a Task Group would be established and that Cllr. S. Colella would be the Chairman of the Group.

78/19      **TASK GROUP UPDATES**

There were no Task Group updates. The next meeting of the Bromsgrove Sporting Overview and Scrutiny Board would be held directly after this meeting.

79/19      **WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE**

Councillor J. Till the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) confirmed that there had not been a meeting of HOSC since her last report.

80/19      **CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

Members showed an interest in respect of Housing Strategy and Residual Waste Minimisation Business Case which would be considered by Cabinet not before 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 respectively. It was agreed that these would be added to the Board's work programme.

**RESOLVED** that subject to the pre-amble above the Cabinet Leader's Work Programme 1<sup>st</sup> February 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020 be noted.

81/19

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Work Programme.

Cllr. R. Hunter requested that the 'Safer Roads' item be reinstated on to the work programme.

Cllr R. Hunter mooted the idea of a Task Group focussing on Flooding in the District. Members showed an interest and officers resolved to send the Topic Proposal Form to Cllr R. Hunter for consideration at the next Board meeting.

**RESOLVED** that subject to the pre-amble above the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Work Programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.53 p.m.

Chairman