

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

12TH FEBRUARY 2020, 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 S. P. Douglas, Councillor P. M. McDonald and
Councillor H. D. N. Rone-Clarke

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

69/19 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A. Kent.

70/19 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

71/19 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE CABINET HELD ON 15TH JANUARY 2020**

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 15th January 2020 were submitted. It was noted that on page 14 there was a typographical error, in the final paragraph reference was made to the workload of "offices" and it was noted that this should be by officers.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 15th January 2020 be approved as a correct record.

72/19 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
BOARD HELD ON 13TH JANUARY 2020**

It was noted that the recommendations detailed in the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 13th January 2020, had been considered at the previous Cabinet meeting.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 13th January 2020 be noted.

73/19

NOTICE OF MOTION - COUNCILLOR S. DOUGLAS

Councillor May invited Councillor Douglas to speak to her motion which had been referred to Cabinet from the full Council meeting held on 20th January 2020.

Councillor Douglas explained that whilst she would not address the Climate Change agenda as it had already been agreed that it was a crisis. She suggested the need for all publicly owned, BDHT and local businesses with private land to be identified for planting. She felt that the creation of a simple data base listing who owned particular pieces of land and action taken would be useful. This was an opportunities for neighbours and communities to take on some responsibility for the planting and subsequent maintenance to enhance their environments and at the same time taking steps to reducing climate harm. She also made reference to a recent report from the Woodland Trust which had highlighted the need for action to be taken and whilst the number of trees planted had double in recent years there was still the need to do more.

Councillor Douglas' gave a number of examples where such work had already been carried out and where there would be the possibility of perhaps a small copse being planted with flowers under the trees. Such planting would bring pleasure and enjoyment to those carrying out the work together with passers-by. It also brought communities together and provided an educational opportunity for young people.

It was appreciated that in some cases the ground preparation needed to be carried out by either Worcestershire County Council's Highways Team or other organisations, but was sure that with their co-operation this could be addressed. There were a number of options in respect of trees that were planted which were inexpensive and therefore the cost of such projects would out way the positive impact from them.

Councillor May responded that the planting of trees and woodland and creation of areas for wildlife was an ongoing theme in the management of the Council's green spaces and, since 2000, had seen the planting of approximately 15,000 trees as new native woodland creation, the planting of a further 2,000 individual park and street trees in urban open spaces and a more than tenfold increase in habitat for water voles and other wildlife on Council-owned land where feasible and beneficial to do so.

Whilst the Council faced varying demands for the use of the remaining land in its ownership, the Green Space Strategy would continue to identify opportunities for tree planting, wildlife habitat creation and maintaining/creating wildlife connections where these could be successfully balanced with other land uses.

Councillors M. Sherrey and S. Webb also advised Members that they had met with Officers to discuss plans for the future.

Councillor Douglas said she was encouraged by the response she had received and thanked Councillor May for considering the motion.

74/19

PAY POLICY STATEMENT

The Executive Director, Finance and Resources reminded Members that this was a statutory document which had to be produced every year, since the inception of the new legislation some five years ago, and whilst it referred to the following year, the details within it were based on the current year. This was due to the national pay award for 2020/21 not currently being agreed and the review of the management restructure being out to consultation.

Members' attention was drawn to the table on page 36 of the report which showed the current spinal points and the table on page 38 which provided the shared cost allocation to this Council. It was noted that the allocation in respect of the Head of Worcestershire Regulatory Services was a shared post across six district authorities.

RECOMMENDED that the Pay Policy as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved.

75/19

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

In presenting the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2020/21 to 2023/24 the Executive Director, Finance and Resources highlighted to Members a number of areas, including the following:

- The Council Tax for the authority would be considered at the Cabinet meeting on 26th February when all of the calculations for the precepting bodies had been received. These would be agreed over the next two weeks.
- It was noted that the Council had only had confirmation of a one year budget from Central Government and estimates had been made for future years.
- The table on page 45 of the report demonstrated the changes in the financial projections and the pressures and savings achieved, which resulted in a final transfer to balances of £170k.
- Unavoidable costs were highlighted, in particular the Local Plan Review and independent highways advise that the Council had received and would need as part of the evidence gathering process for the review.
- Bids including the revenue impact of capital bids, including the development of a strategy development for parks and green spaces and financial support to the Sunrise Project through the Bromsgrove Partnerships. It was also highlighted that support to development of the community hubs in Libraries had been discussed in detail at the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

- Appendix 3 of the report provided details of the additional savings and income, with reference being made to the removal of the estimated payment to the Birmingham LEP.
- The reduction in pension deficit was also highlighted and that it had been felt prudent to transfer £200k to reserves as it was accepted that investments could be volatile.
- The reprofiling of the of the capital programme to more accurately reflect planned spend in future years. It had also been acknowledged that the Investment and Acquisition Strategy of £20m had been a little optimistic.
- The amount of New Homes Bonus (NHB) had been confirmed as being more than anticipated for 2020/21. It was not expected that there would be any legacy payments in future years.
- There was uncertainty around the position in respect of what business rates would look like in the future.
- Pressures in future years were highlighted in the table on page 49 of the report.
- The projected position in respect of the general fund balances in future years and savings needed to maintain balances at the recommended level.

More detailed information was provided in respect of the District Heating Network, which was detailed on pages 52 to 54 of the report. Particular reference was made to the detailed discussions which had been held at the meeting on 15th January and responses to the questions raised at that meeting. The project had now been broken down in to two specific stages and it was confirmed that in respect of the first stage funding had now been secured from the Healthcare Trust of £10k. As the cost of the first stage was £42.5k and that £10k had also been secured from Bromsgrove School, the cost to this Council was now £22.5k. This may further reduce should BDHT choose to make a contribution towards the project. Should the project go ahead to stage 2 then there would be a potential further cost to the Council of £40k but again partners would be asked to make a further contribution.

It was noted that the initial costs of the project and the consultant had been paid for by a Government grant and LEP funding, so there had not been any cost to this Council.

The Leader thanked the Executive Director, Finance and Resources and the wider management team for all their hard work in preparing the Medium Term Financial Plan. This was reiterated by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling who felt this was the most positive for a number of years.

Following presentation of the report, Cabinet Members and those Members attending as observers were invited to ask any questions or comment on the report.

- It was confirmed that the District Heating Project had been deferred at the previous meeting and was now included within the

recommendations under recommendation (i). It was further confirmed that originally £42.5k had been included, but this had now been reduced following contributions from the Health Care Trust and Bromsgrove School totalling £20k, reducing the liability to this Council.

- Councillor P. McDonald acknowledged the reduction of the cost of the first stage to this Council to £22.5k, but questioned what would happen in respect of the funding of the second stage. The Executive Director, Finance and Resources responded that the cost of stage 2 was £120k of which a Heat Network Grant of 67% from Central Government would be received, leaving the Council's liability of £40k. It was confirmed that the other partner organisations would be contacted with a view to them also making a contribution to this second stage, which would reduce the Council's liability. It was further confirmed that discussions the partners organisations would be taking place and these would be followed up with a written request.
- Councillor McDonald also asked for clarification in respect of the NHB Community Grants Scheme funding. The Executive Director, Finance and Resources confirmed that due to the increased amount received this would be £147k for the 2020/21 Scheme.
- Councillor H. Rone-Clarke commented that he had recently attended the Charford Hub where he had been advised of both the work of the Sunrise Project and the Swanswell Project and questioned the role of the Swanwell Project. The Head of Community Services confirmed that the Swanswell Project provided an alcohol and drug recovery service.

RECOMMENDED to full Council

- a) Approve the Unavoidable costs as attached at Appendix 1:
 - 2020/21 £420k
 - 2021/22 £333k
 - 2022/23 £289k
 - 2023/24 £45k

- b) Approve the Revenue Bids as attached at Appendix 2 and Appendix 4 (revenue implications of capital spend):
 - 2020/21 £317k
 - 2021/22 £226k
 - 2022/23 £173k
 - 2023/24 £144k

- c) Approve the Identified savings as attached at Appendix 3:
 - 2020/21 £510k
 - 2021/22 £677k
 - 2022/23 £746k
 - 2023/24 £817k

- d) Approve the Capital Programme bids as attached at Appendix 4:

2020/21 £166k
2021/22 £87k
2022/23 £52k
2023/24 £34k

- e) Approve the capital programme as attached at Appendix 5:

2020/21 £4.371m
2021/22 £12.744m
2022/23 £3.743m
2023/24 £1.888m

- f) Approve the net general fund revenue budget:

2020/21 £11.812m
2021/22 £11.572m
2022/23 £11.511m
2023/24 £11.324m

- g) Approve the increase of the Council Tax per Band D @ £5 for 2020/21.

- h) Approve the transfer to Balances of £170k for 2020/21.

- i) Approve release of up to £72.5k from balances in 2019/20 to provide funding towards the District Heating Feasibility Study forward to Detailed Project Development (DPD) Phase.

The meeting closed at 6.30 p.m.

Chairman