

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

26TH FEBRUARY 2020, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors R. J. Laight (Chairman), A. J. B. Beaumont (Vice-Chairman), S. J. Baxter, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, G. N. Denaro, S. P. Douglas, A. B. L. English, M. Glass, S. G. Hession, C.A. Hotham, S. A. Hughes, R. J. Hunter, R. E. Jenkins, A. D. Kent, J. E. King, A. D. Kriss, L. C. R. Mallett, K.J. May, M. Middleton, P. M. McDonald, H. D. N. Rone-Clarke, M. A. Sherrey, C. J. Spencer, P.L. Thomas, M. Thompson, J. Till, K. J. Van Der Plank, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

WELCOME

The Chairman invited Councillor S. Webb, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Health and Wellbeing to introduce the speakers for the evening. A representative from the YMCA and students who attended the Hub gave a short talk on the work carried out and the impact it had on them.

Councillor P. Thomas, Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Community Services thanked the students for attending and sharing their stories.

78\19

APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor H. Jones.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S. Colella declared an other disclosable interest under Minute No. 86/19 as the former Chairman of the Independent Remuneration Panel was a resident in his Ward.

80\19

MINUTES

Before considering the Minutes, the Chairman highlighted to Members that Item No. 13 on the agenda (Minute No 90/19 would be incorporated within item No. 10 (Minute No.87/19) as had been agreed by all Group Leaders at his pre-brief meeting with them on Monday 24th February 2020.

In considering the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd January 2020 the following points of clarification were raised:

- Councillor C. Hotham asked for his thanks to be noted in respect of the information that Councillor R. Kent had provided for him outside of the meeting, as promised. Councillor Hotham suggested that in future when such requests were made that it would be useful to have the response attached to the minutes of the meeting when the request was made. It was agreed that this would be done.
- In respect of the fourth bullet point on page 10 of the Minutes, under Minute No. 73/19, the Market Hall Site – Meanwhile Use, Councillor M. Thompson questioned whether the vote in respect of this should be recorded within the minutes. It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would consider this matter outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED that subject to the preamble above minutes of the Council meeting held on 22nd January 2020 be approved.

81\19

TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Chairman advised Members that his annual Charity Dinner and Dance would take place on 24th April 2020 at Grafton Manor, further details could be obtained from him or Sharon Chaplin.

There were no announcements from the Head of Paid Service.

82\19

TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

The Leader made the following announcements:

Concerns around Coronavirus

The Leader confirmed that Public Health England, the lead agency, were monitoring and assessing the risk to public health in the UK. The current risk to the UK population was moderate. The Council continued to keep the situation under constant review and would consider further action if clinically necessary. The Council's response had, at all times, been guided by the advice of the Chief Medical Officers. Dr David Kirrage has been appointed by PHE to lead the outbreak.

- Based on the scientific advice of SAGE the UK Chief Medical Officers were advising anyone who had travelled to the UK from mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Macau, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand in the last 14 days and was experiencing cough or fever or shortness of breath, to stay indoors and call NHS 111, even if symptoms were mild.
- The NHS had well established protocols for dealing with high consequence infectious diseases. These were being updated to reflect the circumstances of this particular incident.

- NHS111, acute and secondary care and primary care settings had been made aware of the incident and potential symptoms of Covid-19
- Information for students had been developed and shared with DfE, Universities UK, and the DAs.

As at 24th February a total of 6,536 people in the UK had been tested with 6,527 testing negative and 9 positive. This figure did not include the 4 cases tested positively on the Diamond Princess.

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

The Leader reminded Members that she had answered a question from Councillor A. English at last month's meeting. She had not been made aware that in 2019 a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was commissioned to update the Council's evidence base on Gypsy and Traveller accommodation as it was recommended that this was done every 5 years. It was used to inform the appeal hearing for the site south of Hopwood and the application at Billesley Lane. The appeal was allowed in July 2019 resulting in a total of three pitches gaining planning permission. The 2019 GTAA concluded that there was a residual need of fourteen pitches. Factoring in the permission for three pitches, then new figures stand at a residual need of eleven between 2019/20 and 2023/24. The application at Billesley Lane was refused in April 2019 and a joint appeal lodged in June 2019 to appeal the planning refusal and current enforcement notice. The appeal was currently pending. The Leader had met with Councillor English and the Head of Strategic Planning to discuss this matter.

Councillor English took the opportunity to thank both Councillor May and the Strategic Planning Manager for meeting with her regarding the shortfall and discussing the need for this to be addressed.

83\19

TO RECEIVE COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman invited Mr D. Norton, from the Bromsgrove Museum Trust, to present his question:

Before presenting his question Mr. Norton thanked Council for allowing him to speak and took the opportunity to provide Members with background information to the matter and why he believed it was unreasonable for the Council to request a commercial rate for the storage facility. He also questioned the reason he had been given by the Leader when requesting that the room where the artefacts were being stored, be vacated.

“Having given the Norton Collection to the people of Bromsgrove for their benefit and education, my question is, why should the Norton Collection Museum pay for the storage at the Bromsgrove Council

Depot? As we are a Charitable Trust it would be much fairer to give us a peppercorn rent.”

The Leader responded that when the Norton Trust transferred to the Norton Museum the Council entered into a licence arrangement with the Museum that gave them storage facilities for a period of three years at a nominal rent. This was a short term arrangement agreed as part of the transfer to enable the Museum to have time to organise alternative accommodation arrangements.

The terms of the licence were agreed by both parties and were very straightforward and they gave the Museum Trust three years, a time period which the Leader did not think Members would consider unreasonable, to find alternative space to accommodate their artefacts. In line with this agreement, the Council was now asking the Museum to vacate the space that it occupied at the depot as the space was required for use by this Council.

It was further explained that the Depot space was very limited and it was there to provide the District with Environmental Services. It was not a storage facility and the Council had a need for the space for the effective delivery of its services to its residents. There were many charitable organisations in the district that would like to benefit from what has essentially been a free storage facility, but the Council was not, and neither would it be appropriate, for it to be in a position to provide this kind of service.

The Leader concluded that it was for that reason that the licence was time limited and it was for that reason that the museum needed to look to the other options that it has for the storage of its items and the Council was prepared to assist with the relocation of these items to a site at the request of the holding trust.

A number of points of clarification were raised by Members:

- Whether the Council would continue to work with the Trustees to resolve the issues raised. The Leader confirmed that she had looked at various alternatives and put forward suggestions to Mr. Norton, unfortunately they had not appeared to be suitable. But she would continue to try and resolve the matter.
- The size of the potential storage space required. The Leader advised that when she had contacted a storage company it was suggested that ten 40 foot container units would be needed to accommodate the artefacts.
- Councillor S. Baxter thanked Mr. Norton for the invitation to visit the Museum.

84\19

CONSTITUTION UPDATE REPORT

Councillor G. Denaro, The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling introduced the report and explained that following discussions at the Constitution Review Working Group an amendment to the use of substitutes at Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings, as detailed at paragraph 3.3 of the report, which would leave it to the discretion of the Chairman and take account of extenuating circumstances. It had been felt that such a request was not unreasonable

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Denaro and seconded by Councillor K. May.

Councillor S. Colella questioned the paragraph under Risk Management and it was explained that this was standard wording which was used to cover all reports which related to the Council's Constitution.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules and Terms of Reference be amended as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report.

85\19

APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES UPDATE

Councillor G. Denaro, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling presented the report, which he explained was necessary following recent political group movements. He understood that those affected by the changes had been consulted and had been in agreement to the committee membership numbers detailed in the appendix to the report.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Denaro and seconded by Councillor K. May.

RESOLVED that

- a) for the ensuing Municipal Year, the Committees set out in the table in Appendix 1 of the report be appointed and that the representation of the different political groups on the Council on those Committees be as set out in that table until the next Annual Meeting of the Council, or until the next review of political representation under Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, whichever is the earlier; and
- b) Members be appointed to the Committees and as substitute members in accordance with nominations to be made by Group Leaders.

86\19

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL REPORT

Councillor G. Denaro, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling confirmed that this item had been withdrawn and would now be

considered at the April meeting of the Council. Councillor P. McDonald supported the withdrawal.

87\19

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 12TH FEBRUARY 2020

Pay Policy Statement

Councillor G. Denaro, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling presented the Pay Policy Statement and in so doing highlighted that the figures did not take account of the management review as the previous years' data was used. This would be picked up in the next year's statement. Councillor C. Hotham asked for clarification in respect of point 21 on page 95 of the agenda pack which referred to publication of the full time equivalent salary at £50k and whether this was the overall salary or the salary split between both Councils. It was understood that it was the overall salary, but Councillor Denaro agreed to confirm this outside of the meeting.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Denaro and seconded by Councillor K. May.

RESOLVED that the Pay Policy as detailed in appendix 1 to the report be approved.

Medium Term Financial Plan

Councillor G. Denaro, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling presented the Medium Term Financial Plan. In presenting this Budget to the Council, he advised that he was pleased at the progress that had been made over the last 12 months and, looking forward, was encouraged by the strong position that enabled the Council to maintain its current services to its residents and add to them in areas of concern, that had been highlighted by residents.

Councillor Denaro explained that when the Council started the budget process last year it was looking at a budget gap of £678K to achieve a balanced budget. This had been done with a surplus being created, as evidenced by the table on page 99 of the agenda pack, and was remarkable and gratifying with all the adjustments shown having occurred over several months.

Two particular items were highlighted, an unexpected credit of £436k for the Council's pension funds. £236k of this was used in the budget whilst placing £200k in a pension reserve against swings the other way. He believed this was prudent and sensible. Secondly, the Council had received New Homes Bonus of £1774K which was £589k over that which had been anticipated. This was also good news as it put an additional £70k back into local communities.

In respect of Pay and Inflation costs the Council had budgeted for a 1% rise, but it was now likely to be 2%, hence the additional pressure. Within unavoidable costs was the extra community funding for New

Homes Bonus, which was welcomed. However, not so welcome were the Local Plan review and Highway costs. The Council hoped to reduce its reliance on the Highway consultants from a current peak of £150k to nil over the next 2 years. The Council was continually reviewing its contract with Mott McDonald which was likely to continue until the Council had regained faith in the processes at Worcestershire County Council.

It was noted that savings and additional income have been boosted by two major issues. Following the Council's exit from the GBSLEP rates pool, it no longer had to pay a fee of £150k. The Council had also renegotiated its joint insurance contract with the other Worcestershire Districts which had generated a saving of £130k. It was noted that the treasury savings of £437k was evidence that the Council needed to do a lot more work on scheduling its capital use. Savings from the recent Management restructure and annual savings from the enabling services totalled £99k. New expenditure of £50k had been approved to develop a District wide strategy for Parks and Green spaces which were valued by residents. £28k was being invested in the Sunrise Project, run by BDHT, £15k had been allocated to Enforcement to enable more frequent monitoring of parking round schools in mornings and evenings, however, it was noted that, with 47 schools, it may take some time to identify where this was most needed.

Councillor Denaro highlighted that working with the County Council, the Council was allocating some £50k to support The Bromsgrove Deal which would enable all libraries to become Community Hubs to support local communities and provide valuable support to the young, elderly and those in need.

The net effect of the amendments and those listed in the report was a projected surplus of £170k for 2020/21, which it was recommended be transferred to balances. The levels of reserves were confirmed at £5.4m which it was noted were deemed as being adequate by the Section 151 Officer.

The current estimated balances were £4.471m as at 31st March 2021 which was sufficient to cover the current shortfall of £2.012m and leave a balance of £2.459m which was just over the Council's revised target of £2m balances. However, the Portfolio Holder advised that the Council should not be complacent as many unknowns surrounded local Government funding at present and losing New Homes Bonus would have an impact.

Councillor Denaro went on to say that achieving a balanced budget with no use of balances put the Council's finances on a firm base and enabled it to follow some of its aspirations. It had hoped to have identified some areas for use of the Council's Acquisitions and Investment budgets, but no projects had met the financial criteria. To counter this, it was in the process of amending its strategy to allow an element of social gain to be included to counterbalance the Council's

solely financial risks. It was believed that this would be of use in the retail sector.

The Burcot Lane planning application would go to Planning Committee shortly and was expected to be signed off by Homes England. The pop-up plans for the Hanover Street area were also gathering pace. There was also an evaluation taking place of how to use the new space created by the Dolphin Centre and plans are expected to come forward shortly. The Budget also included plans to invest in testing whether a District Heat Network was viable, which would support the Council's Green agenda.

The Council needed to help its businesses expand and find space for units in order to improve the overall wage rates for Bromsgrove Town. The Council was very successful at encouraging start-ups but not so on moving them into larger premises. It was also noted that the work being undertaken to reduce congestion in the town was paramount to getting things moving and the Council would intervene where it could - the £38 million to be spent on the A38 would also help this.

Members were advised that the papers in respect of council tax setting had been tabled, following agreement of them at the Cabinet meeting held directly before this Council meeting. The levels of tax documented in the report took account of the requirements of Bromsgrove District Council, Worcestershire County Council (WCC), the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner, Hereford and Worcester Fire & Rescue Authority and the various Parish Councils. The Council Tax resolutions that Council was being asked to approve detailed the statutory approvals in relation to the 2020/21 budget and the Council Tax to be recovered on behalf of WCC, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Fire & Rescue Service.

The proposals amounted to a £5 per annum increase for Band D which was recommended for acceptance. Councillor Denaro thanked the Finance and Budget Working Group for assessing the budget process and in particular the Executive Director, Finance and Resources Service and her team for all their hard work.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Denaro and seconded by Councillor K. May.

Councillor C. Hotham. On behalf of the Bromsgrove Alliance proposed an alternative budget recommendation/amendment as detailed in item 13 of the agenda pack. Members questioned whether this proposal was an amendment to the recommendations already proposed or a new recommendation, if it was a new recommendation, then it was highlighted that if it were accepted then there would be no opportunity to debate the substantive recommendations, if it was considered as an amendment then it would stand on its own and was totally different. Clarification on this was requested from the Monitoring Officer and Councillor S. Baxter as Leader of the Bromsgrove Alliance shared her

disappointment with the matter being raised as she felt that her group had taken the right approach to the process and provided written evidence of their amendments to the budget but were now being criticised. After some debate it was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would meet with all Group Leaders, through the Constitution Working Group, to ensure that in future years a set clear budget process was put in place. It was noted that in previous years alternative budgets had been put forward and debated prior to agreement of the budget and that this had worked effectively, with all concerned being able to debate all aspects of the budget being put forward, with this process also being discussed at the meeting the Group Leaders had had with the Chairman on Monday.

Councillor C. Hotham, went on to present the budget for the Bromsgrove Alliance, as detailed on pages 79 – 82 of the agenda pack. He took the opportunity to thank the Executive Director, Finance and Resources and her team for their help and support. The aim of the budget was to support the Town Centre and the health and wellbeing of its residents. Councillor Hotham explained each proposed change from his Group, as detailed on page 79 of the agenda pack. This included a reduction for the incremental progression and inflation figures from £456k to £290k as it was believed that an increase of 70% year on year was excessive. The cost of the review of the Plan was thought to be overly ambitious.

There were a number of new revenue bids, and the increase reflected the provision of three shopper/shuttle minibuses. Councillor Hotham referred to the BURT bus scheme which had proved successful and it was felt that similar services could be rolled out in other areas, with a circular route also being provided. This would encourage residents in the outlying areas to access the facilities in the Town Centre, the benefit being two fold and assist with the regeneration of the Town Centre. It was also suggested that fund be spent in promoting and supporting the three local museums in the district. The final additional cost for this section was in respect of free swimming being offered to all young people under the age of 18, which promoted both health and wellbeing of young people in the District.

The proposed amendments, detailed in the Bromsgrove Alliance alternative budget, were proposed by Councillor C. Hotham and seconded by Councillor S. Baxter.

Councillor Denaro, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling responded to the alternative budget amendments and provided a response on each item separately, and in the order presented:

Incremental progression - The base budget for 2022/23 & 2023/24 was the same position and did not reflect the increase in pay and inflation for 2023/24. Therefore the £456k was made up of 2 years' worth of inflation and was therefore at a realistic level.

Unavoidable pressures - It was the intention to prepare the plan over a three year period. This provided more certainty, in terms on the housing number up to 2040 and the amount of employment land so desperately needed by existing and hopefully new employers. Even if the plan did take longer than three years to prepare it was important for officers, Members and the public in due course, to have the opportunity to debate the key issues once the necessary information to inform discussions had been commissioned.

Highways - It is crucial that the highways information required to inform the plan review was robust. It was necessary to commission independent highways advice as officers did not have the skill set to undertake such work. The use of highways consultants made sure that the appropriate information was used to inform the new plan and the allocation of parcels of land for development.

In respect of the New Revenue Bids the following comments were made:

Buses - It was considered that whilst this appeared to be an interesting option there was currently no demand data that evidenced the need for this service in the District.

Museums - There was no detail as to how this funding would be spent and therefore more information would be required to enable the Council to make an informed assessment of the use of tax-payers money to support the organisations

Free swimming - The introduction of free swimming to everyone under the age of 18 does not provide a solution to the issue of children and young adults who cannot swim. There was also no evidence that this was needed in the District.

Market - As the stalls are under the de minimis level we would have to fund this from Revenue.

Saving and additional income:

Pension - Actuarial calculations were based on a number of assumptions, and regularly see significant swings in the fund assets. Whilst it was agreed that the assumptions were prudent, based on current data, fund assets can be impacted on in an unpredicted way hence the need for the pension reserve.

Council Tax - The Council tax calculation had been made alongside a projection of growth based on numbers from the Planning department and were therefore considered to be robust.

In respect of the Minibuses project, again it was stated that no demand for the shuttle buses at present had been evidenced.

Pension Payment - It would be considered more prudent to not anticipate that this would be the case.

In conclusion, Councillor Denaro suggested that this was a wish list and confirmed that his Group would not be supporting it.

Members went on to debate the amendments proposed by the Bromsgrove Alliance and discussed the follow areas in more detail:

- The importance of a greener and healthier district and the need to ease the congestion in the Town Centre. This could be done by improving the infrastructure at a local level and improving connectivity.
- The number of positive ideas that had been brought forward, however concerns were raised in respect of the pension fund payment.
- The need for some of the suggestions to be considered in more detail before being accepted.
- Support for the free swimming for under 18 year olds – from the health and well being aspect but also water safety. This was an opportunity for all young people in the district to benefit from the local facilities.
- Reference was made to the three museums which it was not felt appropriate for the Council to support at this time as a number of them were private entities.

Councillor S. Baxter spoke in support of the amendments from her Group and expressed her disappointment in the process and highlighted the opportunity for constructive discussions to be held in order for the views and ideas of the other groups to be put forward for serious consideration in future. It was felt that often, ideas were put forward and dismissed, but further down the line were then brought forward and those who had suggested them were not given the appropriate credit. She further reiterated that buses and transport were an integral part of the district and much needed in order to support the regeneration of the Town Centre. It was understood that currently there were areas within the district which did not have access to public transport in order for them to get to the administrative hub.

In summing up Councillor Hotham reiterated the main areas of his Group's alternative budget and highlighted that at least his Group had given some thought to how improvements could be made, which would benefit the wider community and he urged Members to work together going forward, with a view to an improved the process, to allow everyone to feed into the budget setting in future years.

As required under the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 a named vote was taken on the proposed amendment.

For the amendment: Councillors Baxter, Colella, Douglas, English, Hotham, Hughes, Hunter, Jenkins, King, Thompson and Van der Plank (11)

Against the amendment: Councillors Beaumont, Deeming, Denaro, Glass, Hession, Kent, Kriss, May, Middleton, Sherrey, Spencer, Thomas, Till, Webb, Whittaker and Laight (16)

Abstentions from the amendment: Councillors Mallett, McDonald and Rone-Clarke (3)

The amendment was lost.

Councillor P. McDonald proposed an amendment to the budget, in respect of the funds allocated to Mott MacDonald. It was suggested that the £100k should be better spent in other areas and therefore should be redistributed elsewhere, details of which were discussed during his presentation of the amendment. It was also suggested that the £50k allocated to WCC for the Library hubs could be put to better use. The amendment was seconded by Councillor H. Rone-Clarke. It was confirmed that the amendment had not been submitted in writing.

In speaking to the amendment Councillor McDonald highlighted a number of points, including:

- The cost of the work which had already been carried out – it had been well documented that this Council had not had confidence in the work of the Worcestershire County Council Highways department and had therefore engaged Mott Macdonald to “check” the information provided by WCC. The funds allocated for this purpose in the budget could be put to better use and it was not believed that there was now a need for further support from Mott Macdonald.
- Funding which had been given to WCC in order to support the hubs, which were being created within libraries. It was suggested by Councillor McDonald that the libraries were already hubs but had had funding reduced to such an extent that they were no longer able to provide the much needed services that had been provided historically.
- Councillor McDonald also questioned whether the services that were suggested to be placed in the new “hubs” were actually able to provide such services due to continued cutbacks which had taken place in recent years.
- It was inferred that by this Council contributing funds, it was simply paying for the library service, which was actually the responsibility of the County Council.
- Funds used for this service, some £50k, could be put to better use within the District and be used to improve the streets and green spaces.

- It was noted that there were additional funds identified this year for the New Homes Bonus Grants Scheme which had in previous years contributed to many community projects.
- It was suggested that the budget surplus which occurred each year could be spent on services and put back into community projects in order for residents to see that something was being done for their benefit.
- The need for funds to be made available for other parks as it appeared that a large amount of the budget was spent on Sanders Park which was the main part in the district, but funds should also be put aside for outlying parks in the district which were in much need of improvement.
- Play equipment had been removed in some parks due to its age but had not been replaced.
- Funds should also be put aside to improve tree planning and address climate change, with consideration being given to installing solar panels on council buildings and the introduction of electric vehicles.

Councillor McDonald suggested that whilst residents Council Tax had been increased the services and amenities provided had decreased and that this year there was the opportunity for this to be rectified and for residents to see some “return” on what they had paid. It was an opportunity for the Council to give back to the communities and for the Council to freeze the Council Tax and not implement an increase for the first time in a long time.

Members debated the amendment put forward by Councillor McDonald and during that debate discussed the following:

- The need for such an amendment to be provided in writing rather than supported by a detailed verbal presentation.
- The importance of the Council to be brave and address the green issues and impact of climate change within the District.
- The opportunity for the Council to make a difference and invest in the District’s future.
- It was suggested that in order to debate the amendment a written statement should be provided and an adjournment taken to allow Members to consider it in more detail before making a decision.

The Leader responded by reminding Members that decisions needed to be made on the evidence and data available and when this was provided, she was happy to consider any proposals. She provided further information on how it was anticipated that the Hubs would be run and that it would be a new way of working and provide more locally based services for residents to access. Members were reminded that of the demographic of the District and in particular the percentage of those aged 75 and over and the additional care and services that many of those residents needed to access. The Leader also reiterated the importance of the roll of Mott Macdonald, when the Planning Committee

were determining applications, together with the need for their support going forward in the plan-making process.

A further debate took place when Members were reminded of the circumstances under which Mott Macdonald were engaged by the Council and it was clarified that this was not due to an issue with Planning Officers but with the information provided by Worcestershire County Council's (WCC) Highways Team. However, it was noted that WCC had not been held to account and that as time had gone on the advice received from Mott Macdonald had not been consistent and therefore if the Council was to continue with this approach it may be necessary to use a different consultant. This matter was debated at length between a number of Members putting forward views which were for and against the work being carried out by Mott Macdonald. It was suggested that it would be more cost effective for the Council to employ someone to carry out this work on its behalf rather than to use consultants.

Members went on to discuss the implications of freezing the Council Tax, as had been suggested by Councillor McDonald and whether it would be appropriate to make a re-charge against WCC for the work carried out by Mott Macdonald. It was further reiterated that there was a need for the Council to invest in its Parks and Open Spaces throughout the District, not just in Sanders Park.

Before the amendment was put to the vote Councillor McDonald confirmed that the additional funds he was suggesting to be used for the areas discussed were, the £100k allocated to Mott Macdonald and £50k for WCC for the Library Hub project, £50k for the Parks and an additional £68k from the New Homes Bonus funding received with an additional £170k from balances, which gave a total of £438k. This would be spent on £58k for an officer to carry out the work currently being carried out by Mott Macdonald, £150k for outlying parks and open spaces, £10k for trees in the District and £50k for solar panels giving a total of £438k. Councillor McDonald advised Members that whilst this was a big challenge it was the first opportunity in many years for the Council to put something worthwhile back into the communities.

As required under the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 a named vote was taken on the Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 – 2023/24.

For the amendment: Councillors Mallett, McDonald and Rone-Clarke (3)

Against the amendment: Councillors Beaumont, Deeming, Denaro, Glass, Hession, Jenkins, Kent, Kriss, May, Middleton, Sherrey, Spencer, Thomas, Till, Van der plank, Webb, Whittaker and Laight (18)

Abstentions from the amendment: Councillors Baxter, Colella, Douglas, English, Hotham, Hughes, Hunter, King and Thompson (9)

The amendment was lost.

Councillor R. Hunter proposed an amendment in respect of £170k being taken from reserves to be used at the discretion of the Climate Change Working Group to tackle issues that they investigate in the coming year. It was highlighted that Council agreed to set up this Group and that to date it had not made much progress, so this would be an opportunity for it to help tackle climate change and be able to invest in some worthwhile projects that would impact on the future of the District. The amendment was seconded by Councillor S. Hughes.

Councillor Baxter thought this was an excellent idea and was happy to support it, as were a number of other Members. Councillor Baxter went on to comment that she felt it was important for residents to be able to see that the Council was addressing the concerns that had been raised. It was commented that £170k was not an unreasonable figure and the Council was able to afford to do this and was an opportunity for it to make a real difference.

Councillor Denaro responded that whilst he understood the context behind the proposed amendment, he would need to see a business case for any proposal before agreeing to it. Any such business case would be considered on a case by case basis, rather than simply allocating a lump sum to the Working Group.

Councillor Sherrey, who chaired the Climate Change Working Group also commented that the Group had met on a number of occasions and received presentations from officers which had highlighted a number of projects that were already either underway or in the pipeline, which showed that work was already being done to address this matter and that these were reflected in the budget.

It was also commented that the Council did not normally ring-fence funds and therefore it was queried as to whether this was appropriate from an accounts point of view.

In summing up Councillor Hunter commented that this was an opportunity for the Council to make positive changes and he was concerned that this would be a lost opportunity. The amount he was suggesting was small in comparison to the budget as a whole, but could have a huge difference throughout the District.

As required under the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 a named vote was taken on the proposed amendment.

For the amendment: Councillors Baxter, Colella, Douglas, English, Hotham, Hughes, Hunter, Jenkins, King, Mallett, McDonald, Rone-Clarke, Thompson and Van der Plank (14)

Against the amendment: Councillors Beaumont, Deeming, Denaro, Glass, Hession, Kent, Kriss, May, Middleton, Sherrey, Spencer, Thomas, Till, Webb, Whittaker and Laight (16)

Abstentions from the amendment: 0

The amendment was lost.

Councillor C. Hotham then went on to propose a further amendment, along similar lines to that proposed by Councillor Hunter. This was for £20k to be taken from the reserves and used by the Climate Change Group as it saw fit.

Following a brief debate this amendment was put to the vote.

As required under the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 a named vote was taken on the proposed amendment.

For the amendment: Councillors Baxter, Colella, Douglas, English, Hotham, Hughes, Hunter, Jenkins, King, Thompson and Van der Plank (11)

Against the amendment: Councillors Beaumont, Deeming, Denaro, Glass, Hession, Kent, Kriss, Mallett, May, Middleton, McDonald, Rone-Clarke, Sherrey, Spencer, Thompson, Till, Webb, Whittaker and Laight (19)

Abstentions from the amendment: 0

The amendment was lost.

In debating the substantive recommendations the Leader highlighted a number of projects which would have a positive impact on the residents and District as a whole, this included the pop up Bird Box project at the old market hall site, funding for fly tipping. She advised Members that the Council was listening to residents' concerns and taking action where necessary and working towards making the District a better place for everyone.

Members responded with a number of comments including:

- There appeared to be nothing innovative in the budget which would allow Bromsgrove to stand out, particular reference was made for the need to take action in respect of Climate Change.
- The increase in Council Tax was not reflected in the services provided, which residents would consider had been reduced.
- Disappointment that Members had not been able to input into the budget process more positively.

In summing up Councillor Denaro assured Members that consideration would be given to the budget-setting process in order for Members to play a more active role and for the ideas which were brought forward to be considered at an earlier stage. This would give all groups the opportunity to look at things together and be more involved.

As required under the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 a named vote was taken on the proposed amendment.

For the recommendations: Councillors Baxter, Beaumont, Colella, Deeming, Denaro, Douglas, Glass, Hession, Hotham, Jenkins, Kent, Kriss, May, Middleton, Sherrey, Spencer, Thomas, Till, Webb, Whittaker and Laight (21)

Against the recommendations: Councillors English, Hughes, Hunter, Mallett, McDonald, Rone-Clarke and Van der Plank (7)

Abstentions from the recommendations: Councillors King and Thompson (2)

RESOLVED:

- 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) Approval 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.

Following the debate, Members discussed the best way forwards in future years to ensure that all groups were able to contribute positively to the budget setting process. Councillor Denaro acknowledged that there had been some interesting ideas which warranted further investigation and detailed business plans, which had not been possible when they were presented in this manner. It was agreed that the Group Leaders would meet to discuss in more detail a process for future years to ensure that all groups were involved in the budget setting process. It was also highlighted that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Finance and Budget Working Group had continued to work well and its continued role should be considered in any discussions. The Monitoring Officer was asked to look into this matter further going forward.

88\19

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 26TH FEBRUARY 2020 (TO BE TABLED AT THE MEETING)

Council Tax Resolution

Councillor G. Denaro, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling introduced the report and proposed the recommendations, which were seconded by Councillor K. May.

As required under the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 a named vote was taken on the Council Tax Resolutions:

For the recommendation: Councillors Baxter, Beaumont, Colella, Deeming, Denaro, Douglas, Glass, Hession, Hotham, Hughes, Hunter, Jenkins, Kent, King, Kriss, Mallett, May, Middleton, McDonald, Rone-Clarke, Sherrey, Thomas, Thompson, Till, Webb, Whittaker and Laight (27)

Against the recommendation: 0

Abstentions from the recommendation: Councillors English and Van der Plank (2)

RESOLVED that

- 1.1 The calculation of the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2020/21 (excluding Parish precepts) as **£8,483,805.00.**
- 1.2 That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2020/21 in accordance with sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
 - (a) £42,619,245 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act (taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils) (*i.e. Gross expenditure*)
 - (b) £33,183,608 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act.
(*i.e. Gross income*)
 - (c) £9,435,442 being the amount by which the aggregate of 3 (a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3 (b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
 - (d) £253.58 being the amount at 3 (c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
 - (e) £951,832 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34 (1) of the Act (as per the attached **Schedule 3**).
 - (f) £228.00 being the amount at 3 (d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3 (e) above by Item T (1 (a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34 (2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.
 - (g) The amounts shown in Column 3 of **Schedule 1**. These are the basic amounts of the council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of the Council's area shown in

Column 1 of the schedule respectively to which special items relate, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act. (District and Parish combined at Band D).

- (h) The amounts shown in Column 5 of **Schedule 1** being the amount given by multiplying the amounts at 4(g) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands;

- 1.3 It be noted that for the year 2020/21 Worcestershire County Council, Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwelling in the Council's area as indicated below:

	Valuation Bands							
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Worcestershire County Council	874.03	1,019.71	1,165.38	1,311.05	1,602.39	1,893.74	2,185.08	2,622.10
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	150.13	175.16	200.18	225.20	275.24	325.29	375.33	450.40
Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority	57.33	66.88	76.44	85.99	105.10	124.21	143.32	171.98

- 1.4 Having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 4(h) and 5 above, that Bromsgrove District Council in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 hereby sets the amounts shown in **Schedule 2** as the amounts of Council Tax for 2020/21 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

- 1.5 That the Executive Director Finance & Resources be authorised to make payments under Section 90(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 from the Collection Fund by ten equal instalments between April 2020 to March 2021 as detailed below:

	Precept £	Surplus on Collection Fund £	Total to pay £
Worcestershire County Council	48,782,833.00	1,248,036.00	50,030,869.00
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	8,379,328.49	214,396.00	8,593,724.49
Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority	3,199,599.40	83,211.00	3,282,810.40

1.6 That the Executive Director Finance & Resources be authorised to make transfers under Section 97 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 from the Collection Fund to the General Fund the sum of £9,680,390 being the Council's own demand on the Collection Fund (£8,483,805), Parish Precepts (£951,832) together with the distribution of the Surplus on the Collection Fund (£244,753).

1.7 That the Executive Director Finance & Resources be authorised to make payments from the General Fund to the Parish Councils the sums listed on **Schedule 3** by two equal instalments on 1 April 2020 and 1 October 2020 in respect of the precept levied on the Council.

1.8 That the above resolutions 3 to 5 be signed by the Chief Executive for use in legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the recovery of unpaid Council Taxes.

1.9 Notices of the making of the said Council Taxes signed by the Chief Executive are given by advertisement in the local press under Section 38(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

89\19 **TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 12TH FEBRUARY 2020**

The minutes from the Cabinet meeting held on 12th February 2020 were submitted for information and noted by Members.

90\19 **ALTERNATIVE BUDGET PROPOSALS - BROMSGROVE ALLIANCE**

The alternative Budget Proposals from the Bromsgrove Alliance were considered under the Medium Term Financial Plan item as detailed in Minute No. 89/19.

91\19 **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Question Submitted by Councillor S. Hughes

"What is this council doing to protect the Grade II listed URC Congregational Church on Windsor Street? The 350 year old church and

much loved heritage asset has been allowed to fall into a complete state of disrepair, will the Leader provide reassurance that the council will do everything in its power to reverse this decline?”

The Leader responded that planning permission and listed building consent had been granted in 2016 to convert the Chapel and neighbouring Sunday School building to offices. Work commenced, but unfortunately was then halted and the owner had now put the Chapel up for sale. The Conservation Officer was meeting the owner on 26th February at the property to check that both buildings were still wind and watertight. It had been suggested that the Council serve an Urgent Works Notice, however this would only require the owner to make the building wind and watertight, which he was currently doing. The Conservation Officer was trying to work with the owner to ensure that the buildings did not deteriorate further whilst a new owner was being sought.

Question Submitted by Councillor R. Hunter

“The Government recently pledged £5billion to improve bus and cycle routes in every region outside of London. This is to pay for new zero carbon buses, more frequent services and more affordable fares. It will also fund 250 miles of new separated cycle routes. What will this council do to make sure Bromsgrove gets its fair share of this funding to deliver the public transport and cycling improvements we need?”

The Leader responded that at this stage no arrangements had been made concerning the detailed process to access this funding. It was expected that this would be done as part of the National Bus Strategy, to be published later this year at the Comprehensive Spending Review. The Council would ensure it worked closely with Worcestershire County Council and where relevant, other adjoining local transport authorities, to ensure that the Council had the best chance to access what was likely to be high in demand funding. As soon as the Leader had more detail, she would update Members.

92\19

MOTIONS ON NOTICE

Members considered the following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor P. McDonald:

“We call upon the Cabinet to write to ‘First Worcestershire’ to reverse its latest cuts to the 144 service which is vital for many to get to work and for children to get to school; as well as those going about their daily business.”

The motion was proposed by Councillor McDonald and Seconded by Councillor H. Rone-Clarke. Councillor McDonald agreed that he was happy for his motion to be put to the vote without debate. It was clarified to other Members that this had been agreed between the Group Leaders at their meeting with the Chairman on 24th February 2020.

On being put to the vote the Motion was carried.

The meeting closed at 8.20 p.m.

Chairman

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Bromsgrove District Council

Composition of Committees 2019-20 (Revised 26/02/20)

Committee	Cons	Lab	Independent Alliance	Liberal Democrats	Comments
Overview and Scrutiny Board	<p align="center">6</p> <p>Deeming Spencer Till Beaumont Kriss Glass</p> <p>(Sub: Middleton, Whittaker, Jones, Hession)</p>	<p align="center">1</p> <p>McDonald</p> <p>(Sub:)</p>	<p align="center">3</p> <p>Colella Hotham Thompson</p>	<p align="center">1</p> <p>Hunter</p>	<p align="center">11 Members on Board</p>
Licensing Committee	<p align="center">6</p> <p>Jones Glass Spencer Till Sherrey Whittaker</p> <p>(Subs: Webb, Kriss)</p>	<p align="center">1</p> <p>Rone-Clarke</p> <p>(Sub: Mallett)</p>	<p align="center">3</p> <p>English Thompson Baxter</p> <p>(no named sub)</p>	<p align="center">1</p> <p>Hughes</p> <p>(Sub: Hunter, King)</p>	<p align="center">11 Members on Committee</p>
Planning Committee	<p align="center">6</p> <p>Deeming Thomas Whittaker Hession Beaumont Glass</p> <p>(Subs: Spencer, Sherrey, Middleton, Kriss)</p>	<p align="center">1</p> <p>McDonald</p> <p>(Sub: Rone-Clarke)</p>	<p align="center">3</p> <p>Baxter English Douglas</p> <p>(Subs: Van Der Plank, Thompson, Hotham)</p>	<p align="center">1</p> <p>King</p> <p>(Subs: Hughes, Hunter)</p>	<p align="center">11 Members on Committee</p>

Audit, Standards and Governance Committee	5 Whittaker Hession Spencer Beaumont Kriss	1 Mallett	2 Baxter Van der Plank	1 King	9 Members on Committee
Electoral Matters Committee	4 Hession Middleton Glass Deeming	1 Mallett	1 Colella	1 Hunter	7 Members on Committee
Appeals Committee	3 May Denaro Kent	0	2 Baxter TBA	0	5 Members on Committee
Appointments Committee (nominees made as and when necessary)	3 TBA	1	1 Baxter	0	5 Members on Committee
Statutory Officers (nominees made as and when necessary)	3 TBA	0	1 Baxter	1	5 Members on Committee
TOTAL	36	6	16	6	64 Places

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COUNCIL

Cabinet meeting 26th February 2020

Council Tax Resolution 2020/21

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

- 2.2.1 The calculation of the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2020/21 (excluding Parish precepts) as **£8,483,805.00**.
- 2.2.2 That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2020/21 in accordance with sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
- (a) £42,619,245 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act (taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils) (*i.e. Gross expenditure*)
 - (b) £33,183,608 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act.
(*i.e. Gross income*)
 - (c) £9,435,442 being the amount by which the aggregate of **2.2.2 (a)** above exceeds the aggregate at **2.2.2 (b)** above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
 - (d) £253.58 being the amount at **2.2.2 (c)** above (Item R), all divided by Item T (**2.1.(a)** above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
 - (e) £951,832 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34 (1) of the Act (as per the attached **Schedule 3**).
 - (f) £228.00 being the amount at **2.2.2 (d)** above less the result given by dividing the amount at **2.2.2 (e)** above by Item T (**2.1.(a)** above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34 (2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.
 - (g) The amounts shown in Column 3 of **Schedule 1**. These are the basic amounts of the council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of the Council's area shown in Column 1 of the

schedule respectively to which special items relate, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act. (District and Parish combined at Band D).

- (h) The amounts shown in Column 5 of **Schedule 1** being the amount given by multiplying the amounts at **2.2.2(g)** above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands;

2.2.3 It be noted that for the year 2020/21 Worcestershire County Council, Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwelling in the Council's area as indicated below:

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Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority	57.33	66.88	76.44	85.99	105.10	124.21	143.32	171.98

2.2.4 Having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at **2.2.2(h) and 4** above, that Bromsgrove District Council in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 hereby sets the amounts shown in **Schedule 2** as the amounts of Council Tax for 2020/21 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

2.2.5 That the Executive Director Finance & Resources be authorised to make payments under Section 90(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 from the Collection Fund by ten equal instalments between April 2020 to March 2021 as detailed below:

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2.2.7 That the Executive Director Finance & Resources be authorised to make payments from the General Fund to the Parish Councils the sums listed on **Schedule 3** by two equal instalments on 1 April 2020 and 1 October 2020 in respect of the precept levied on the Council.

2.2.8 That the above resolutions ~~3 to 5~~ be signed by the Chief Executive for use in legal proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the recovery of unpaid Council Taxes.

2.2.9 Notices of the making of the said Council Taxes signed by the Chief Executive are given by advertisement in the local press under Section 38(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

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