

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

6TH JULY 2020, AT 6.00 P.M.

VIRTUAL MEETING

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

Observers: Councillor G. Denaro, Portfolio Holder for Finance and
Enabling
Councillor P. Thomas, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cultural Services
and Community Safety

Officers: Ms. J. Pickering and Ms. A. Scarce and Mrs J. Gresham

13/20 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies were received from Cllr. R. Deeming and Cllr. M. Glass with
Cllr. H. Jones attending as his substitute.

14/20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

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

15/20 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 2ND JUNE 2020**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on
2nd June 2020 were submitted for Members' consideration. It was queried
by a number of Members whether the wording for the recommendation
regarding the Discretionary Business Grant Scheme was correct.
Democratic Services confirmed that the recommendation was circulated
to Members prior to being taken to Cabinet for consideration and no
amendments were received from relevant members of the Overview and
Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny
Board held on 2nd June 2020 be approved as a true record.

IDENTIFYING RACIAL DISPARITIES WITHIN BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S OPERATIONS - TOPIC PROPOSAL

Identifying Racial Disparities within Bromsgrove District Council's Operations - Topic Proposal (Item 7) was moved forward in the agenda.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor H. Rone-Clarke, who was invited to the meeting to speak on behalf of the Topic Proposal. Councillor Rone-Clarke presented his Topic Proposal to the Overview and Scrutiny Board. Mr Jilani was also welcomed to the meeting and had been invited to support Councillor Rone-Clarke and the topic proposal. During discussions which followed Mr Jilani queried what mechanisms were in place where ethnic minorities could express their voice at Bromsgrove District Council and if there were wage disparities between workers from the BAME community at the Council.

The Head of Transformation & Organisational Development, Business Transformation reported that the Council had mechanisms in place that included the following: -

- Regular meetings with Equalities Officer
- Organisation-wide equality training including 'Dignity at Work'
- Staff Survey
- Close working with Trade Unions
- Phone a Friend scheme
- Robust job evaluation process ensuring an objective recruitment and pay procedure.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer explained that there were already two task groups currently being undertaken and that the Democratic Services team did not have the capacity to undertake a further investigation and that this Topic Proposal may have to wait until another investigation was completed. This was acknowledged by the Overview and Scrutiny Board but Members expressed that such an important topic needed to get underway in the very near future. Councillor McDonald, supported by a number of Members suggested that, as this was such an important subject, extra funds should be sought in order to carry out this additional task group or that it should take precedent over the existing work.

There was a detailed discussion regarding the Topic Proposal during which the following was debated: -

- A request by Councillor Beaumont, supported by a number of Members that the wording of the Topic Proposal be amended so as to read 'Identifying if racial disparities exist within the council's operations'. This change was agreed by the Board and the wording would be amended as part of a review of the scope at the first Task Group meeting if the Topic Proposal was agreed.
- That the topic proposal could be added to the Work Programme as a regular item at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting, before a decision was made in respect of a task group being established.
- Further investigation by officers be made and information presented to the Board at a future meeting.
- The suspension of one of the two task groups or the Finance and Budget Working Group – this was not agreed by Members as it was felt that the current task groups were investigating important topics and the Finance and Budget Scrutiny Working Group was integral to the budget setting process.
- That a request for a recruitment process to be undertaken to increase capacity within the Democratic Services team – this was considered unworkable as the timeline to recruit to a post would be at least 3 months and probably longer given the current pandemic.

The Chairman requested a brief adjournment.

On returning from the adjournment the Board considered whether the Corporate Performance Working Group, which had not met for some time could be suspended in order to allow the task group investigation to be undertaken. Members were agreeable to this being considered as an amendment to recommendation (c) detailed within the report.

The Chairman once again thanked Councillor H. Rone-Clarke and Mr Jilaini for their presentation to the Board.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Corporate Performance Working Group be suspended in order that the Identifying Racial Disparities within Bromsgrove District Council's Operations Task Group investigation be undertaken;
- and
- b) Councillor P. McDonald be appointed as Chairman of the Identifying Racial Disparities within Bromsgrove District Council's Operations Task Group.

17/20

COVID-19 UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed the Executive Director, Finance and Resources, to the meeting who presented the Covid-19 update report to the Board (it was noted that this report would be considered at the Cabinet meeting due to be held on 8th July 2020) and in doing so highlighted the following to Members:-

- Monthly delta returns were being made to Central Government; these included any extra costs incurred during the pandemic and any additional loss of income.
- Any current balances may be required to be used in the future, but Central Government had not yet indicated whether this was the case.
- That estimated figures presented within the report were a snap shot in time and based on some assumptions including shoppers return to the High Street and parking fees.
- That the digital transformation of the organisation had been implemented early and effectively in order to satisfy home-working during the pandemic.

Councillor P. McDonald queried what travel savings had been made during lockdown. The Executive Director, Finance and Resources undertook to find out the information and circulate to Members.

It was hoped that the next tranche of Central Government funding would aid the Leisure sector including the leisure facilities in the district.

Councillor G. Denaro, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling, thanked the team for all of their hard work in an uncertain and evolving environment.

It was noted that Members had asked for a further report later in the year to be able to establish a more detailed picture of the impact of Covid-19 on the District. This was currently scheduled on the Work Programme for the October 2020 meeting.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

18/20

BROMSGROVE SPORTING TASK GROUP FINAL REPORT - CABINET RESPONSE

The Chairman welcomed Councillor P. Thomas, Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cultural Services and Community Safety to the meeting.

Councillor P. Thomas presented the Cabinet response to the recommendations made in respect of the Bromsgrove Sporting Task Group report. All recommendations were agreed by Cabinet subject to the caveats included in the report.

19/20

STAFF SURVEY - UPDATE

The Human Resources & Development Manager presented the update provided in respect of the Staff Survey to the Board and explained that due to the current pandemic the next staff survey had been deferred for the moment. There had, however, been two smaller scale surveys carried out, a Communications survey and a Working Arrangements survey.

The full staff survey would be undertaken at a later date and that the previous provider would be engaged again during the process. This would ensure that similar questions were asked and allow for a comparison of data to be built up.

Councillor S. Colella, who had as a result of the Staff Survey Joint Scrutiny Task Group had been appointed as Staff Champion expressed that using the same provider was a great idea as it ensured value for money. He also stated that, as part of his role, he would be interested in greater engagement in the whole process and it was agreed that he would arrange a time to meet with the Human Resources & Development Manager.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

20/20

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER

The Democratic Services officer presented the Recommendation Tracker to the Board. Members asked that a typographical error within the tracker be rectified. Officers agreed to undertake these amendments.

RESOLVED that the Recommendation Tracker be noted.

21/20

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

Councillor M. Thompson confirmed that there had not been a meeting of the Finance and Budget Working Group since the last meeting. However, the Work Programme had been reviewed and a meeting would take place in the coming weeks.

22/20

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

It was confirmed that there had not been a meeting of the Corporate Performance Working Group since the last meeting and as agreed earlier in the meeting it would be suspended in order that the Identifying Racial Disparities within Bromsgrove District Council's Operations task group investigation be undertaken. Councillor M. Glass who chaired the Corporate Performance Working Group would be advised of this decision.

23/20

TASK GROUP UPDATES

Councillor S. Colella explained that the Impact of the Review of Library Service Task Group meeting that was held on 30th June 2020 was abandoned as the Group was not quorate and would be rearranged for a later date.

Councillor R. Hunter informed the Board that the initial meeting of the Review of Flooding Task Group was due to be held on 16th July 2020.

24/20

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

Councillor J. Till explained that the information she had requested from Worcestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) had been circulated to Members of the Board.

Councillor S. Colella thanked Councillor J. Till for the information that was requested in his absence at the last meeting. He asked that Councillor J. Till ask for a more detailed response from HOSC regarding Covid-19 post code 'hot spots' in the District. Councillor J. Till undertook to request the information and circulate to the Board.

25/20

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Senior Democratic Officer presented the Cabinet Work Programme to the Board. Members showed an interest in respect of the Burcot Redevelopment - next steps, finance and operating model and the Replacement of Burcot Hostel with alternative suitable accommodation for Homeless Households reports. As these items were due to be considered by Cabinet on 6th August 2020 (this was an additional meeting of Cabinet which had recently been scheduled in to the Municipal Calendar) it would also be necessary to schedule an extra meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board. This was agreed by the Board and the meeting was agreed for 4.30pm 6th August 2020 just prior to the Cabinet meeting.

RESOLVED that subject to the preamble above the Cabinet Leader's Work Programme 1st July 2020 to 31st November 2020 be noted.

26/20

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Work Programme for 2020-21.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Work Programme for 2020-21, be updated to include the items discussed and agreed during the course of the meeting.

27/20

TO CONSIDER ANY OTHER BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD OF LEGAL, EQUALITIES AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING.

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 7.43 p.m.

Chairman