

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY BOARD

TUESDAY, 24TH MARCH 2009 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors D. L. Pardoe (Chairman), S. P. Shannon (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. J. M. Boswell, Miss D. H. Campbell JP, R. J. Deeming, C. B. Taylor and C. J. Tidmarsh

Officers: Mr. T. Beirne, Mr. P. Street, Mrs. C. Felton, Mrs. S. Sellers and Ms. D. McCarthy

17/08 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

18/08 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest or whipping arrangements were received.

19/08 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the last meeting of the Scrutiny Board held on 27th January 2009 were received.

With reference to minute number 15/08 (page 3), it was questioned if there had been any update in relation to when the draft Floods and Water Bill was expected to be published.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the minutes be confirmed as a correct record; and
- (b) that the Board be informed when it was anticipated the draft Floods and Water Bill would be published.

20/08 **AIR POLLUTION - STATIONARY VEHICLES WITH RUNNING ENGINES**

Consideration was given to a report which related to taxi drivers and bus drivers leaving their vehicle engines running unnecessarily at the taxi rank and bus station at Mill Lane in Bromsgrove Town Centre.

There was some discussion regarding whether or not leaving vehicle engines running for a short period of time was better or worse for the environment than turning them off and back on. The Board also referred to the differences between modern engines and older engines in relation to the impact on air quality.

Enforcement issues were considered and although it was understood that the Police were the enforcement authority with regards to this issue, it was questioned if any Council Officer (such as a Licensing Officer) monitored the behaviour of taxi drivers and acted as an enforcer on an informal basis.

It was understood that there could be mitigating circumstances for leaving an engine running while a vehicle was stationary and an example referred to stated in the relevant guidance was "on a cold day at the taxi rank". However, there was still some concern over such behaviour and it was believed by some Board Members that this was an important issue for the public.

The Board understood that the first stage was to persuade and encourage taxi drivers and bus drivers to change their behaviour, as suggested through the recommendations within the report. However, the Chairman believed that further information from relevant officers was necessary before the Board could decide the best way forward.

RESOLVED:

- (a) that Mr. R. Goundry (Team Leader - Pollution and General) and Mrs. S. Smith (Principal Licensing Officer) be invited to attend the next meeting of the Scrutiny Board on 28th April 2009 to provide expert advice; and
- (b) that consideration of the recommendations within the report be deferred until the next meeting of the Scrutiny Board scheduled to be held on 29th April 2009.

21/08 **CABINET REQUEST FOR FLOODING SCRUTINY**

The Board considered the Cabinet request for a scrutiny exercise to be undertaken to investigate the issues and actions taken within Wards affected by flooding, including any unresolved problems.

It was understood that numerous recommendations had recently been approved by the Cabinet following the joint countywide scrutiny investigation and the Countywide Task Group would be reconvening to consider updates from all agencies involved. It was stated that information would be communicated to Members via the recommendation tracker report and that the Board Chairman would be directly involved as this Council's representative on the Countywide Task Group.

Members were also reminded of the officer group which had originally been set up to ensure approved recommendations from the Watercourses Task Group had been implemented. As advised by Overview and Scrutiny Members, the Cabinet had agreed that the officer group would revise its terms of reference and composition in order to address the implications for the District of approved recommendations contained within the Joint Countywide Flooding Report. The Board was informed that the Chairman of the Scrutiny Board and Councillor Miss D. H. Campbell had been invited to attend future meetings of the officer group.

Members were reassured that the Board would be kept up to date with progress made by the officer group in relation to implementing the flooding recommendations. Updates provided to the Countywide Task Group would also be communicated to the Board via the recommendation tracker.

It was strongly believed that flooding was an important issue which needed to be addressed, however, considering the recent work and continuing work of both officers and Members from this Council and across the County, the Board questioned what value a further scrutiny investigation would add at this stage.

The complexities surrounding flooding issues were briefly discussed, including the difficulties of ownership and responsibility. It was understood that to effectively deal with flooding matters the District Council could not work in isolation and it was important that a co-ordinated approach was taken which was why the Joint Countywide Task Group had been established originally.

Members were reassured that all agencies involved, including Parish Councils, had been consulted during the Joint Countywide Task Group investigation and had received copies of the report and therefore were aware of the recommendations. It was also stated that the report and recommendations were due to be discussed at the next Parish Council Forum.

It was believed the dedicated officer group at Bromsgrove District Council had not yet been given the opportunity to progress the recently approved recommendations relating to flooding. There was also a concern that, taking into account the continuing work of the Joint Countywide Task Group, an additional scrutiny exercise at this time could lead to unnecessary duplication. However, Members were keen to ensure that they were kept informed of progress on a regular basis to enable the Board to monitor the work of the Countywide Task Group and the Bromsgrove officer group.

RESOLVED that due to the importance of a co-ordinated approach being taken by all agencies involved to address flooding issues, another scrutiny task group should not be established at this time. However, due to the importance of this issue, the Scrutiny Board instead monitors progress made by the officer group at Bromsgrove District Council on a regular basis and is kept informed of the continuing work of the Joint Countywide Flooding Task Group in the near future via the Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker.

22/08 **SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TRACKER**

Members of the Board considered the items contained within the Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker and questions raised were answered by the Executive Directors.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker be noted.

23/08 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board considered the items included within its Work Programme.

Scrutiny Board
24th March 2009

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board's Work Programme be noted and updated as necessary.

The meeting closed at 7.00 p.m.

Chairman