

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

11TH JANUARY 2021, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Observers: Councillor P. L. Thomas as Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cultural Services and Community Safety
Councillor S. A. Webb as Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Health and Well Being

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Ms J. Willis, Mr. M. Bough and Ms. A. Delahunty, Mrs J. Gresham and Ms. K. Somers

59/20

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C. Spencer and Councillor S. Colella with Councillor S. Douglas as named substitute.

60/20

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor R. Hunter declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 5, Homelessness, Flexible Homelessness Support and Homelessness Reduction Grants 2020/2 due to his position within a not-for-profit housing organisation. It was decided that Councillor R. Hunter would not need to be exempt from the discussion (see item 5).

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

61/20

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 23RD NOVEMBER 2020

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 23rd November 2020 were submitted for Members' consideration.

Councillor C. Hotham requested an amendment be made at item 5 - Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services to respond to Questions from Members in Respect of the Process and Policy for Third Party Events. He suggested that 'with' replace between in the following sentence: 'There was concern from some Members that there seemed to be very little communication **between** Ward Members and Parish Councils prior to some particular events taking place.

The Democratic Services Officer present undertook to make the amendment.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 23rd November 2020 be approved as an accurate record.

62/20

SAFER ROADS PARTNERSHIP - PRESENTATION

The Chairman invited Councillor R. Hunter to introduce the item and explain to the Board the background behind his request for the West Mercia Police Road Safety Team being invited to the meeting. In doing so he explained that he felt it was an important area for the Board to consider as speeding was a frequent topic of concern from residents. He reported to Members that he would like to understand more fully the criteria for speed prevention equipment being installed in various sites around the district and the role that Members could play in communicating the process of tackling speeding to residents in the District.

The officers from West Mercia Police Road Safety Team introduced themselves and confirmed to Members that they were no longer part of the Safer Roads Partnership and although partnership working was still undertaken it was no longer as a member of the Safer Roads Partnership. Members were informed that the team was funded entirely through speed awareness courses.

During presentation of the item the following was highlighted to Members:

- In addition to covering enforcement the team dealt with various other areas of road safety including, campaigns, education, traffic management consultations. The work was carried out across various partnerships however most of the work was done on behalf of local authorities. It was clarified to Members that funding for the team was no longer received from local authorities but

solely through speed awareness courses and that all funding from speeding fines was returned to the Treasury.

- A dedicated Collision Analyst and Business Data Analyst were responsible for looking at data and deciding on where the work by the team was carried out based on data collected. The number of fatalities and injuries were reported to Members and that there had been a slight decline in numbers over the last five years which was encouraging.
- Education, engineering and enforcement were the main approaches adopted by the team when dealing with road safety issues. Enforcement was the last resort of the three and a large part of the work was carried out in education. It was explained to Members that frequent campaigns were carried out with local communities, although it had been more difficult to undertake these in light of Covid-19 and that social media campaigns had played an important part in the education programmes. Engineering was the responsibility of the Traffic Management Advisors within the team and they provided a link between the team and the Local Authority. Members were informed that the vehicle activation signs, and speed limits were the sole responsibility of Worcestershire County Council as the Local Highways Authority. It was explained to Members that the enforcement approach was always data led, and the key priority was always to reduce the numbers injured or killed on the roads.
- Residents were encouraged to contact Parish Councils in the first instance if they had concerns about speeding in their area. This resulted in a more collective approach to tackling the issue. The team explained that The Road Safety: Community Toolkit was a guide that provided other options to communities rather than enforcement. It was agreed that this guide would be circulated to Members.

After the presentation Members were invited to ask questions of the West Mercia Police Road safety Team. In particular, there was interest from Members regarding the community programmes that were available and the process that needed to be undertaken by resident to embark on these projects. It was reiterated to Members that the preferred way for residents with concerns to contact the team was through the Parish Council or District Council, data would then be collected at the site that had been identified as an issue. If the data collected indicated the need for enforcement (or other methods) then action would be taken. The criteria for the Community Speed Watch programme was explained to Members and this included

numbers of required volunteers and necessary safety measures in place.

The Operation Snap initiative was explained in detail to Members in order for them to fully understand the procedure for residents to report incidents and upload dashcam footage. This had proved to be a successful initiative and had resulted in fines and driving points being issued.

Members were informed that all incidents where there had been a serious injury or fatality would be investigated by the Traffic Management Advisors and liaison would take place with Worcestershire County Council and appropriate measures taken. It was reported to Members that the level speeds were enforced within the National Police Chief's Council Guidelines at 10% plus 2 and the 85th percentile was considered.

There was concern from some Members that the low numbers of Police speed detector vans in the District and that the number of speeding tickets issued was low in comparison to the number of residents in the District.

Members were advised that if they needed further information, they could contact the team who would be happy to help.

The Chairman thanked the West Mercia Police Road Safety Team for their presentation.

RESOLVED that the presentation by the West Mercia Police Road Safety Team be noted.

63/20

HOMELESSNESS, FLEXIBLE HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT AND HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION GRANTS 2020/21

The Strategic Housing Officer was welcomed to the meeting in order to present the report for Homelessness, Flexible Homelessness Support and Homelessness Reduction Grants 2020/21. During the presentation the following was highlighted to Members:

- The allocation of Homelessness Prevention Grant report was brought before Members annually. In previous years, the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant and the Homelessness Reduction Act Grant had been awarded to the Council. It was clarified to Members that these had been uplifted and combined and were

now known as Homelessness Prevention Grant. Members were advised that this award was in addition to the Homelessness Prevention grant budget set by the Council.

- The report requested approval of the allocation of grants and outlined the services, organisations and initiatives to help prevent homelessness and assist those who had become homeless. In addition to this the report requested delegated authority to the Head of Community and Housing Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing to use any unallocated Grant during the year or make further adjustments as necessary to ensure full utilisation of the Grants for 2021/22 in support of existing or new schemes be approved. The new Homelessness Prevention Grant was ring-fenced and funds were to be used to meet the three priorities set out by Government.
- The total allocation for funding was £285,794. The report proposed that £247,171 be allocated to a variety of projects and initiatives that included projects for young people, the funding of a Young Persons Pathway Worker, furniture provision for ex-offenders, Rapid Response Winter Weather Workers and the management of temporary accommodation costs for Bromsgrove District Housing. The Board were advised that the remainder of the funding of £38,623 had not been allocated, as this year's grant award had been uplifted on the 21st December 2020 and there had not been time to consider how it might be best utilised. It was planned that the Countywide Homelessness Strategy would be considered in order to identify any gaps in provision that would benefit from assistance.

The Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Health and Well Being to comment on the report and she explained that it was important to continue providing funding to these providers and thanked officers for all of their hard work in the prevention of Homelessness in the District.

Members questioned the figures that were presented in the report and it was agreed that there had been a miscalculation and that it would be amended to reflect the correct figures.

There was detailed discussion regarding the access to information in respect of rough sleeping and homelessness and it was requested that information be more readily available throughout the District for those who needed to access services, particularly outside of office hours. It was clarified to Members that information was available online, however

it was suggested by some Members that those who were in need of services might not have access to digital equipment.

Some Members queried, in respect of the CCP Rough Sleeper Outreach and Support Service who it was proposed would receive funding, how many Bromsgrove homeless or rough sleepers would benefit from this funding. It was clarified that approximately 10 people had been assisted over the previous year by this service in addition to responding Streetlink requests. Some Members requested the data in respect of the numbers of homeless and rough sleepers in Bromsgrove and the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Health and Well Being explained that Portfolio Holders across the County did meet to discuss this particular area and undertook to provide the Board with this information. It was suggested that Homelessness be added to the Board's Work Programme for future consideration.

RESOLVED that the Homelessness, Flexible Homelessness Support and Homelessness Reduction Grants 2020/21 be noted.

64/20

NOTICE OF MOTIONS - REQUEST TO INVESTIGATE

1) Notice of Motion - Encouraging responsible use of fireworks – Councillor R. Hunter

The Chairman invited Councillor R. Hunter to introduce the item in respect of the Notice of Motion which had been referred from Full Council.

During the presentation, the following was highlighted to Members:

- That the purpose of the motion was to highlight the distress that the use of fireworks could cause to vulnerable people and animals and practical measures, if any, could be taken by the Council.
- That this was a complex issue given the powers that were given to a Local Authority in this area.

There was detailed discussion with Members regarding the legislation that was already in place in respect of the use of fireworks and that it was important to understand what powers if any, could be taken by the Council to make changes in this area. Councillor R. Hunter confirmed that this Motion was not necessarily involved in seeing what could take place within the

legislation but more the practical steps that might be made by the Council to mitigate the impact on residents.

Councillor P. Thomas, as Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cultural Services and Community Safety was invited to comment on the report and in doing so noted to Members that a balance view needed to be taken and that further information from officers might be useful for members in order to make an informed decision.

Councillor R. Hunter proposed recommendation 'that the request is included on the work programme and the Board undertakes the investigation, discuss broad terms of reference and sets a time scale for completion of the investigation' this was seconded by Councillor P. McDonald. On being put to the vote this recommendation was lost.

Councillor A. Kriss proposed the following 'recommendation that further information be requested from a relevant source before deciding whether or not further investigation is required', this was seconded by Councillor S. Douglas. On being put to the vote this recommendation was carried.

Democratic Services Officers undertook to put the item on the Board's Work Programme for future consideration by the Board.

2) Notice of Motion - Encouraging responsible use of fireworks – Councillor P. McDonald

The Chairman invited Councillor P. McDonald to introduce the item in respect of the Notice of Motion which had been referred from Full Council. It was clarified to Members that investigation into the amount of mileage expenses that had been claimed during previous years and during (Covid-19).

Councillor P. McDonald proposed recommendation that the request is included on the work programme and the Board undertakes the investigation, discuss broad terms of reference and sets a time scale for completion of the investigation' this was seconded by Councillor R. Hunter.

Councillor A. Kriss proposed the following 'recommendation that further information be requested from a relevant source before deciding whether or not further investigation is required', this was

seconded by Councillor S. Douglas. On being put to the vote this recommendation was carried.

In respect of Councillor R. Hunter's Motion:

RESOLVED that

- a) further information be requested from a relevant source before deciding whether or not further investigation was required.

In respect of Councillor P. McDonald's Motion:

- b) further information be requested from a relevant source before deciding whether or not further investigation was required.

65/20

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman introduced the Finance and Budget Working Group update in his role as Chairman of the Group. He explained that the Working Group met on 16th December 2020 and had looked at the following areas in detail:

- Councillor Hunter's Notice of Motion
- Update on the impact of Covid-19
- Budget Setting Process and Timescales

The Chairman reported that Councillor R. Hunter had been invited to the meeting to discuss his notice of motion which had been referred to the group from the Full Council meeting held on 21st October 2020. The possibility of enforcing existing legislation to increase the collection of Council Tax rates for empty properties in the District was discussed in detail. However, a number of considerations were made in respect of this item particularly in light of the current pandemic and the time it would take to implement. It was agreed that this item be added to the Work Programme for future discussion. Councillor R. Hunter was also invited to be a part of the Finance and Budget Working Group and agreed to consider joining the group in the future.

Members were informed by the Chairman that the Senior Accounting Technician had provided a presentation outlining the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances and of grants received by the Council during lockdown. It was agreed that these areas would be monitored closely by the Group in the coming months.

It was reported to the Board that officers had carried out Budget Setting Workshops for Heads of Service and senior officers. The training had been arranged to try to improve the accuracy of budget setting in the future. This was welcomed by the group as there had been concerns raised by Members concerning the accuracy of budget setting in previous years.

The Work Programme was discussed by the Working Group and a clear programme of work was agreed for future consideration.

As the Working Group continues its scrutiny it will, as always, report back to the main Board and if necessary, suggest that reports are also brought forward for all of you to consider.

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

66/20

TASK GROUP UPDATES

a) Equalities Task Group – Chairman, Councillor P. McDonald

Councillor P. McDonald presented this update and informed Members that a report had been prepared for the investigation and would be presented at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting that was due to take place in February 2021.

b) Impact of Review of Library Services Task Group – Chairman, Councillor S. Colella

The Democratic Services Officer presented the update in the absence of Councillor S. Colella. In doing so she reported to Members that there had been one meeting of the Task Group since the previous Board meeting. Councillor L. Hodgson Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities at Worcestershire County Council (WCC) had been in attendance at this meeting to provide further context of the new countywide Library Strategy.

c) Impact of Flooding in the District Task Group – Chairman, Councillor R. Hunter

Councillor R. Hunter updated the Board regarding the Task Group and informed Members that he had given his apologies for the last Task Group meeting but that Councillor S. Colella taken the role of Chairman for the meeting. He reported to Members that

some draft recommendations had been presented to the group and would be discussed at the next meeting which was due to be held on 25th January 2021. Members were advised that there would be a number of officers in attendance for that meeting to discuss the potential recommendations.

RESOLVED that the verbal updates in respect of the Task Groups be noted.

67/20

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

Councillor J. Till presented the update from the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) and advised Members that there had been no meeting since the last Board meeting was held.

Councillor J. Till undertook to circulate to the Board any information or minutes received.

RESOLVED that the verbal update in respect of the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

68/20

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Officer presented the Cabinet Work Programme and drew Members' attention to the following items which were already included on the Board's Work Programme:

- Final Council Tax Support Scheme

It was agreed that the following items would be included in the Board's Work Programme for consideration at future meetings:

- Green Homes Funding
- Notice of Motion - Encouraging responsible use of fireworks
- Notice of Motion - Travel Expenses
- Homelessness
- Recreation Road Car Parking

RESOLVED that subject to the preamble above the Cabinet Work Programme be noted and 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.

69/20

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

This item was discussed as part of the previous item.

The meeting closed at 8.01 p.m.

Chairman

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