

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**20TH JANUARY 2021, 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. Robinson, R. J. Hunter, R. E. Jenkins, H. J. Jones, 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 welcomed Members to the virtual full Council meeting and reminded them of the protocol to be following during it. Members were reminded of the use of roll calls and that the detail of these would not be included within the minutes and if Members wished for a named vote to be taken, then this should be requested in the usual manner.

Members were also reminded that the meeting was being live streamed to the Council's You Tube channel to allow the public to view it.

50\2020

**TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

51\2020

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor R Hunter declared an other disclosable interest in respect of Minute No. 63/2020 in that he worked for a not for profit housing association.

Councillor M Thompson declared an other disclosable interest in respect of Minute No. 62/2020, Councillor S Baxter's question on notice. Reference was made to Bromsgrove School, who were his employer.

Following a number of declarations of interest being made in respect of Minute No. 62/2020 Councillor H. Rone-Clarke's motion on notice, it was suggested that a blanket exemption for the purpose of that item be put in place. It was therefore:

**RESOLVED** that a Council dispensation be granted for the purposes of Minute No 62/2020 in respect of being a past or present member of a union.

52\2020

**MINUTES**

Members considered the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the full Council meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 be approved.

53\2020

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

The Chairman and Head of Paid Service confirmed that they had no announcements to make on this occasion.

54\2020

**TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader explained that the current Covid-19 figures for Bromsgrove District, as at 10.00 am on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021, showed a total of 570 cases per 100,000 over the past 7 day period. This was a decrease of 15.7% on the previous 7 days. The national rate for England was 507 cases per 100,000 and for the West Midlands 568 per 100,000. She was pleased to see a decrease in the numbers, but as there were still very high it was still important that everyone adhered to the hands, face and space rules.

Councillor R Hunter thanked the Leader for the update and commented on the very sobering figures that had been provided. He also thanked the Leader for keeping Group Leaders up to date with the proposed Vaccination Centre being based at the Artrix, which everyone was keen to see opened to allow Bromsgrove to play its part in tackling the dreadful virus. He hoped that everyone could work together to make this as successful as possible.

The Leader responded that she, along with everyone else would be pleased to see this opened, but unfortunately it was not within her remit to make any announcements on this. It fell within the scope of the NHS and she had not been privy to any start date. She hoped that as many residents as possible could get vaccinated in the near future, and the economy could be kick started and residents get back to some sort of normality in their lives.

Councillor P McDonald asked the Leader whether she could advise of any arrangements that would be made regarding transport, as the residents from the outlying areas such as Rubery, would struggle to get to the Artrix without their own transport, as it was quite a distance for the elderly or less able to walk from the bus stop to the Artrix. Councillor

McDonald asked if there would be any specific arrangements made for that vulnerable group.

The Leader responded that she was not able to respond to the query raised but would ask the Chief Executive to raise this point with the NHS. She did however point out that there would be further vaccination centres in the whole of the district, and it would not solely be dependent on the Artrix. She was aware that some GP Practices and pharmacies were also coming on board for vaccination purposes, but she would ask for clarity on the issue of transport provision.

55\2020      **TO RECEIVE COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were no comments, questions or petitions from members of the public on this occasion.

56\2020      **URGENT DECISIONS**

The Chairman advised that there was one Urgent Decision and reminded Members that this was not for debate. It was confirmed that full details of the Urgent Decision had been made available on the Council's website when it had initially been signed off.

57\2020      **CONSTITUTION REVIEW REPORT**

Councillor G. Denaro, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources (including Governance/Policy and Performance/HR) presented the report and highlighted that the aim of this was to try and speed up the manner in which Section 106 monies reached the communities. He commented that in the past these had to go through the full committee process, so the request was for authority be given to the Section 151 Officer to spend in line with the agreements up to £50k, which would cover a lot of the S106 agreements.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Denaro and seconded by Councillor M Sherrey.

Councillor Hotham, whilst agreeing with the sentiment of the recommendation, proposed an amendment to include the consultation of the Ward Member for the area where the monies were to be spent. He felt that it was only reasonable that the Ward Member be consulted, whilst he appreciated that the monies were in many cases almost ring fenced, he believed there was some discretion to how it could be spent and therefore suggested that the recommendation be amended to include (after Section 151 Officer) in consultation with the Ward Member. The amendment was seconded by Councillor S. Baxter and she commented that certainly locally where there had been a little bit of discretion in S106 monies it was useful to be involved.

Councillor A Kent asked for clarification as to whether the amendment was legally permissible, and the Monitoring Officer confirmed that it was and highlighted that there were often delegations which were in place which included consultation with the relevant Ward Member. She confirmed that they would not be able to make the decision or influence it but could be consulted on what that decision was.

Councillor Denaro was happy to support the amendment and for it to be included within the recommendation and on being put to the vote it was

**RESOLVED that authority to spend S106 monies up to a value of £50k be delegated to the S151 Officer, after consultation with the Ward Member, to spend in line with the S106 agreement which caused the receipt of the S106 monies.**

58\2020

### **POLITICAL BALANCE REPORT**

The Chairman asked Members to disregard the report in the main agenda pack and referred them to the updated report in the supplementary pack on pages 1 to 6.

Councillor G. Denaro, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources (including Governance/Policy and Performance/HR) presented the report and explained that, as Members would be aware, if numbers in any party changed than a recalculation of the committee places was necessary. The schedule at the last page of the report showed the revised committee structures and had been agreed by the various Group Leaders outside of the meeting.

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 be approved; and**
- b) **Members be appointed to the Committees and as substitute members in accordance with nominations to be made by Group Leaders and the details appended to the minutes of this meeting.**

59\2020

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET**

**Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board**

Councillor A Kent, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services introduced the report and clarified that, due to the timing of the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board (WRSB) meeting, which was held shortly before the Council's meeting in December, he had covered off the majority of the recommendations within the discussion at the December meeting. However, the main changes had been due to the deferment of the uplift which WRS had imposed at late notice in respect of the ICT accommodation charges and the ICT hosting charge. It was noted that all recommendations had been included for clarity.

Councillor Kent took the opportunity to recognise the sterling work which WRS were doing during the current situation. The Covid Marshalls were doing an excellent job and he recommended that any Members who received local information about difficulties in their areas, if they contacted WRS or himself, they would assist in alleviating any problems. He thanked them for their hard work in a very difficult time, which only highlight what a good service it was.

The Chairman requested that the Council's thanks be relayed back to WRS.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor A Kent and seconded by Councillor H Jones.

**RESOLVED that**

- a) the additional partner liabilities for 2021/22 in relation to the increase in accommodation charges and ICT hosting from Wyre Forest District Council be approved as follows;

Bromsgrove District Council	£2k
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- b) partner authorities approve the following 2020/21:

- 1.1 the 2021/22 gross expenditure budget of £3,739k as shown in appendix 1 of the report;
- 1.2 the 2021/22 income budget of £529k as shown in appendix 1 of the report;
- 1.3 the revenue budget and partner percentage allocations for 2021/22 onwards –

	£'000	Revised %
Bromsgrove District Council	468	14.59

- 1.4 the additional partner liabilities for 2021/22 in relation to unavoidable salary pressure –

Bromsgrove District Council	£9k
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1.5 the additional partner liabilities for 2021/22 in relation to three technical officers.

	Tech Officer Income Generation £000	Tech Officer Animal Activity £000	Tech Officer Gull Control £000
Bromsgrove District Council	5	6	-

60\2020

**TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 13TH JANUARY 2020**

The Chairman referred Members to the supplementary agenda and explained that, unfortunately, there had been a technical hitch with the Cabinet minutes produced in the supplementary pack sent out to all Members on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021. The error referred to Minute No. 57/20 (which was shown as a repeat of Minute No. 58/20). It was confirmed that there were no recommendations to Council from that minute, so it did not impact on the recommendations for consideration at this meeting. It was further confirmed that the minutes had been updated on the Council's website and all Members have received an updated version via email.

61\2020

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

The Chairman highlighted to Members that an updated list of the questions had been provided in the supplementary pack and that a period of 15 minutes was allocated to the presenting and responses to, these questions. There would be no supplementary questions.

**Question Submitted by Councillor S Robinson**

“Can the portfolio holder inform me what enforcement is being carried out to stop cars parking on double yellow lines?”

The Leader responded that the Council's Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) routinely patrolled the District carrying out enforcement on all Traffic Regulation Orders including double yellow lines. Last financial year 426 Parking Contravention Notices (PCNs) were issued against vehicles parked on double yellow lines, this financial year due to COVID-19 restrictions the number of PCNs issued so far on yellow lines was 245. Unfortunately, it was not possible for CEOs to be everywhere all of the time, therefore if Members had any specific areas of concern, they could contact the Parking Team via email [bdcparking@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:bdcparking@bromsgrove.gov.uk) who would do their best to increase monitoring of that area for a period of time.

**Question Submitted by Councillor K Van der Plank**

“Many of our local businesses are really struggling especially as a result of this new lockdown. Please could the Leader confirm what business grants are still available to businesses in the District impacted by Covid. What is the process for applying for these and the deadline and how is this going to be communicated across the district?”

The Leader responded that the Council had received funding to provide support to any of its businesses that were closed during the November period of restrictions or had been forced to close during the current period of national restrictions. In addition, it had provided support to hospitality, hotel and leisure businesses that were open during December but were significantly impacted by the tier 2 and tier 3 restrictions that were in place.

The Council has developed a discretionary grant fund for businesses that were not required to close but were impacted by the restrictions. This scheme would provide support to hospitality and leisure supply chain businesses who would have lost income because their customer base was forced to close.

The schemes could be applied for on the Council’s website; and each application would be considered for eligibility for all the Government support schemes and were being promoted on-line and by social media. Where contact details were held, businesses would be contacted by text or email and urged to apply directly by the Council.

**Question Submitted by Councillor R Hunter**

“Please could you update council on what is being done to support those local businesses worst affected by the pandemic. Can you confirm how many Bromsgrove businesses have received the Additional Restrictions Grant since November and how many Bromsgrove pubs have received their Christmas Support Grant?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources firstly, asked it to be put on record his thanks to all the teams that had been dealing with the grant applications at this exceptionally busy time. The Christmas Support Payment required an application from the ratepayer and evidence that the pub met the Government’s eligibility requirement. Officers had identified all the pubs which met the Government’s definition of a wet-led pub for the purposes of the Christmas Support Payment and contacted them by telephone requesting the information needed to award the grant. The payments to pubs will be made in bulk at the point the applications have been received and determined, which he understood to be imminent.

The Council had set aside £900,000 of funding to provide support to businesses that were excluded from support because they had not been

required to close and were ineligible for the mandatory grant schemes. The scheme was an application based scheme and officers would provide a briefing to Members on the operation of the scheme and current levels of support provided, in due course.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources explained that North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) was not involved in the direct delivery of the Covid-19 business grants; however, they were promoting them extensively via their website, in weekly newsletters and through their existing contacts. They were also providing tailored advice to businesses regarding the availability, eligibility and application process for the Covid-19 business recovery grants.

Partners including the Growth Hubs and Worcestershire County Council had provided a number of grants specifically aimed at supporting businesses through the pandemic including small business recovery grants for retailers and the visitor economy; pivot and prosper grants to help businesses adapt their trading models and sustain and grow to support businesses with resilience and transformation projects. All of the usual business support grants were also available, supporting business start-up and growth. These too were promoted extensively via NWEDR's website, in weekly newsletters and through their existing contacts. NWEDR were also providing tailored advice to businesses regarding the availability, eligibility and application process for these business grants. It was the intention to set up briefings for Members as soon as practicable.

### **Question Submitted by Councillor S Baxter**

“Please can the Leader update the Council on progress with the green borehole district heat network proposal to be sited at Bromsgrove School.”

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services responded to this question on behalf of the Leader. She advised that the Council was successful in its bid to the Government Heat Network Development Unit for funding of a Detailed Project Development of the Bromsgrove Town Low Carbon Heat Network. A Project Management team had recently been appointed and they would oversee production of a full business case to inform the decision by Council and Stakeholders as to whether to progress to Commercialisation and Build. They would also bid for funding for the Commercialisation/Build phase.

The feasibility study had recommended an open loop ground source heat pump as the preferred option for a low carbon heat source and a location in the vicinity of Bromsgrove School had looked favourable. However, it was important to note that the Detailed Project Development would include a full assessment and refinement of that and all other aspects of the proposed network.



Bore-hole drilling (if that was still the preferred technology) would now take place at the Commercialisation Phase. This followed close liaison with Colchester, who were in the construction phase of an open loop ground source heat pump heat network. They had found that although an early test borehole was often recommended to de-risk the project, the benefits of this were outweighed by the following:

- the additional cost and practicalities of bringing drilling kit onto the site twice - once for a test borehole and again to continue with full construction.
- a single borehole could produce false pessimism or false optimism as it might be an outlier in terms of performance. Instead, the Project Managers would procure a specialist in open loop ground source heat pumps to assess the available information and design the system during the Detailed Project Development phase. There would then be an optional contract extension for those specialists to procure the drilling contractors and manage the borehole drilling and testing during the Commercialisation Phase, assessing and amending their detailed design depending on findings.

The Council aspired to reaching the Commercialisation in 2022 with the build out from 2023 onwards.

Councillor Baxter asked if she could ask a follow up question, but was advised that, as Notices of Motion were being considered again, supplementary questions were no longer being taken. The Chairman therefore suggested that Councillor Baxter speak to the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services outside of the meeting.

### **Question Submitted by Councillor S Douglas**

“Please can the Leader tell the Council what state of readiness any proposals are for the Bromsgrove Town Centres so that good supported applications can be made for future funding. If a proposal fits a grant criteria, readiness is a key to success. It is sad that we did not qualify for the recent large Government Grants for towns awarded recently.

These plans might include feasibility studies, concept designs/plans and viability appraisals.

Who is involved in these preparations?

What is the role of town centre councillors particularly in the early stages?

What more can be initiated locally towards implementation?”

The Leader responded that there were three key pieces of work currently being undertaken. The first was the development of a strategy for all Bromsgrove Centres, the second was the commissioning of urban design and viability advice related to Council owned land in Bromsgrove Town Centre and the third was the commissioning of a Bromsgrove

Town Centre 2040 Vision. Members would also be aware that the emerging Local Plan process included forming a vision for Bromsgrove Town Centre.

The Bromsgrove Centres Strategy was expected to be received from officers working in NWEDR by the end of February 2021. This study set out suggestions for the enhancement of key retail areas. The Leader confirmed that she would circulate this to all Members for comment.

In terms of the Council owned land in Bromsgrove Town Centre external support had been commissioned for the development of some proposals. These plans included feasibility studies, concept designs/plans and viability appraisals. This commission was being managed by officers in NWEDR. When the consultants had completed their tasks, NWEDR would be preparing a report for Cabinet and Council. The Leader also commented that it was worth noting that this was the current position and things may change, particularly given the current challenging circumstances, which town centres faced.

The work for the Bromsgrove Town Centre 2040 Vision had been tendered and the successful firm would be appointed by the end of January 2021. The work was co-ordinated by officers in NWEDR who would be supported by the external consultants. A programme of Member, stakeholder and public engagement would be put in place to ensure input from all local key stakeholders, residents, and businesses. The Leader encouraged all Members to engage with this process.

Members would also be aware from the recently approved Economic Recovery Strategy and also the Economic Strategy itself, that a key role for officers in NWEDR was horizon-scanning for future funding opportunities and Government grants. The Leader suggested that it was not always the case that worked up proposals improved eligibility for grants, as eligibility criteria were funding programme specific, so ready-made proposals may not necessarily fit the eligibility for a particular funding programme. However, when relevant and eligible, officers could use feasibility studies and viability appraisals, as part of the evidence base for funding applications.

It was the Leader's view that all Members had a role to play in ensuring the vitality and viability of Bromsgrove town centre and all its urban centres and the Leader hoped the centres would be well used by all residents. She encouraged Members to engage in the formal and informal opportunities for engagement which she had outlined in her response.

62\2020

### **MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

The Chairman explained that in respect of Councillor King's motion it had been agreed by the Leader and Officers had been tasked with investigating delivery of this Motion. In respect of Councillor Hunter's

motion, it had also been agreed and Officers again, had been tasked with investigating delivery of this Motion.

The Chairman confirmed that the final Motion, from Councillor H Rone-Clarke, which had been published in the supplementary agenda pack for Members' consideration, at page 27, would be debated in the usual way, with the time limit of one hour.

### **Trade Unions**

Members considered the following Motion on Notice, submitted by Councillor H Rone-Clarke:

#### *Background Information:*

- i. People on lower paid jobs are less likely to be able to work from home, increasing their risk of exposure to Coronavirus.*
- ii. That research by the TUC has found unionised workplaces to be more 'Covid secure.'*
- iii. Union membership brings job security.*
- iv. Trade union membership will provide greater employment rights beyond the end of the pandemic.*

*Council sends congratulations to the Trade Union Congress on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passing of the Trade Union Act and*

*Council requests Cabinet to do the following:*

- i. Commit to sending a representative of the Cabinet to attend trade union liaison meetings moving forward.*
- ii. Reaffirm its commitment to working/consulting with trade unions as it leads us through the Coronavirus crisis and beyond.*
- iii. Commit to promote trade union membership both as an employer and for the people of Bromsgrove.*

The motion was proposed by Councillor Rone-Clarke and seconded by Councillor P McDonald.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Rone-Clarke explained that there were two aspects to the preparation of his motion and firstly the motion was put together with the help and guidance of people in the Trades Union movement and secondly, an integral part of the motion was that the Cabinet engaged more robustly with the Trades Unions, particularly those who represented employees and staff working at this Council. He had been interested to hear at the beginning of the meeting the number of Members who had or continued to be members of a Trade Union. Councillor Rone-Clarke asked Members to ask themselves a key question before they made a decision as to whether to vote for or against the motion; "If you are a member of a trade union would you not want the same robust engagement with your employer or stakeholders

related to your Trade Union?" He wanted to extend the same courtesy to the staff of this Council, so he urged Members to consider this when making a decision and hoped Members would vote in the right way.

Councillor S Colella raised a point of order and asked for clarification as to what exactly Members were being asked to vote on. The Chairman suggested that Members were considering points i), ii) and iii) in the concluding paragraph of the motion. This was confirmed as being correct by Councillor Rone-Clarke.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor P McDonald made the point that nobody in the chamber should ever forget those who had enabled them to be where they were today and had fought hard and sacrificed so much to make a strong economy which everyone benefited from. Councillor McDonald referred back to the Tolpuddle Martyrs, the Match Makers and many more to those struggling today to make a better economy for so many. Those who were organised were able to fight unscrupulous bosses who were using the pandemic as an opportunity to cut wages and worsen working conditions. Those that were organised in such a way were able to defend their hard earned rights. The evidence from the last century and a half was clear, stronger unions created a stronger economy, which in turn resulted in better paid jobs for all. It was highlighted that it was the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Trade Union Movement, which should remind everyone of the giant steps that have been made in improving working life, but not forgetting the challenges that also lie ahead. The last 150 years also showed that the strength of the economy went hand in hand with the strength of the Trade Unions and in the troubled economic times the Trade Unions are needed more than ever. Councillor McDonald highlighted a number of benefits that were available to those within a trade union, these were available due to workers joining together to negotiate with management in order to ensure workers were treated with respect and supported fairly. Unions worked hard to ensure workplaces were more inclusive to women, the LGBT community, black and minority workers, those with a disability and older workers. Where there was a trade union, workers were far less likely to face problems in relation to a number of areas such as sickness. They were also safer work places, with significantly lower injury rates and were also more Covid secure. They supported those who were injured and unfairly treated at work, in addition they supported workers in getting the skills they need to get better paid jobs. Most importantly they allowed the workers to have a voice at work and where unions were involved, often helped companies to survive difficult times. It was also noted that they also had an impact on non-union work places. It was further highlighted that during this pandemic there had been a rise in union membership, as people realised that being organised was the best way of ensuring they had a safe working environment. All the evidence over the last 150 years had demonstrated this country had a stronger economy from working with and along side the trade union movement.

In responding to the Motion on Notice, the Leader made the following comments:

The Council had a long and productive relationship with the Trade Unions which had been particularly beneficial during the months of the current pandemic. The Council regularly engaged, involved, and discussed, with the Trade Unions, matters that affect the workforce. This had included discussions around the Council's approach and response to the pandemic.

The Council also held regular Informal Trade Union Liaison (ITUL) meetings that took place every eight weeks and had both local and regional Union representatives in attendance. All three Unions were represented at these meetings, UNISON, GMB and Unite and were chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive. All participants, management, and unions had an opportunity to put forward items for the agenda and at the end of every meeting any other business could be raised to ensure nothing was missed. The meetings provided and contributed to the effective working relationship that the Council had with all three trade unions. At the start of the pandemic the frequency of the meetings was discussed with the Trade Unions, to ensure all were comfortable with the dialogue that was being held, particularly in relation to the Council's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Council took the decision, early in March 2020, prior to the first formal lockdown, to ensure all staff who could work from home would do so until further notice. Only roles that were unable to be undertaken remotely had continued to be present within the workplace. This position had been maintained throughout the entire pandemic. Other safety measures had been put in place to protect the Council's workforce and ensure its workplaces were Covid Secure. Some of these measures included (this was not an exhaustive list):

- reviewing business continuity plans
- reviewing risk assessments
- separating public and employee access points into buildings
- mandatory signing in at all locations (or use of the NHS Track and Trace App)
- wearing of face coverings in communal areas of buildings
- sanitiser stations in all buildings
- limiting access to communal areas to one person at a time
- extensive cleaning regimes
- partitions for employees working in public areas.
- PPE for front facing employees.
- Regular production and updating of employee Frequently Asked Questions in line with Government guidance.
- Regular remote staff briefings with the Chief Executive Officer

In addition to the ITUL meetings the local Union representatives also attended the Corporate Health, Safety & Wellbeing Committee, also

chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive, where employees, Councillor representatives and the Senior Health & Safety Officer discussed and actioned matters relating to corporate health and safety. The Council was committed to Health and Safety and the protection of its employees.

The Council also had a Wellbeing Group that met regularly to specifically discuss the wellbeing of its employees during the pandemic. The local UNISON Representative also attended this group. The meeting was again chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive and had representatives from Health and Safety, Human Resources, Equalities and Communications.

As the Leader had demonstrated; the Council was absolutely committed to working and consulting with the Trade Unions. However, she felt that it would be inappropriate for a member of the Cabinet to attend Trade Union liaison meetings as most matters discussed at the meetings were of an employment nature and which was an officer to officer matter.

The Leader advised that it was not the role of the Council to promote union membership to its workforce. Trade Union membership was a decision for an individual to make. The Council recognised and valued the important relationship it had with the Unions. Historically, when any of the three Unions have decided to hold a recruitment drive to attract new members, the Council had always been fully supportive of this activity and had provided space in its buildings for this activity to be undertaken. Events were also advertised and promoted on the ORB (Council Intranet) and the Council also funded a full time Union convenor who was the local UNISON representative.

In summary, the Leader advised that her Group would not be supporting the motion; but in closing she stated that the Council would continue to support the constructive relationship that it had with Trade Unions and she hoped that this cordial and productive relationship continued.

The Leader acknowledged the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Trade Union Act and took the opportunity to formally thank everyone at Bromsgrove District Council for their hard work and co-operation during this pandemic.

Councillor A Kent raised a point of order as when the motion was presented Members had been told that the motion had been composed in conjunction with trade unions, he therefore wished to clarify whether any of the Councillors putting forward the motion had any financial interest from the trade unions as they did on occasion fund members of the Labour Group and whether this was the case for those presenting the motions. Councillor Kent asked the Monitoring Officer to confirm whether this was a matter which should have been declared under the relevant item on the agenda.

The Monitoring Officer responded that on the basis that there were interested declared in the context trade union membership, Members

had sought a dispensation in this regard. Councillor Rone-Clarke responded that he had not taken any monies from any trade union during his one election campaign as had been inferred.

During the debate which followed a number of areas were discussed:

- It was commented that in 150 years there had been many changes, which were largely due to changes in legislation which protected the employee, which had been put in place by various governments.
- Clarity was requested in respect of the background information provided in the motion. Councillor Rone-Clarke confirmed that he would provide this to Councillor A Kriss outside of the meeting.
- The Leader of the Council was thanked for her detailed response as there had been initial concerns that the motion was aimed specifically at some concerns that may have been raised in respect of this Council in particular.
- Councillor L Mallett highlighted that it was clearly an important and appropriate time for such an item to be discussed. Whilst the Leader had set out the range of measures that were in place at the Council, it was welcomed to hear the support that the Council gave and therefore he could see no reason why the motion would not be supported, as it appeared not to be asking the Council to anything other than what it already did and was committed to doing.
- Councillor J Till commented on the Leader's response and the work that the officers did in line with the three unions. She highlighted that this had been discussed at the Equalities Task Group meeting, Members of which were present at this Council meeting, when it had been highlighted how well the Council and the unions worked together.
- Councillor R Hunter was pleased to support the motion and suggested it was important to look at what the motion was actually asking for, to reaffirm the Council's commitment to working with the trade unions and as had been highlighted there was excellent work already being carried out and therefore this should not be a problem, it also asked Council to promote the unions, which it appeared to already do. It was suggested that if the inclusion of a Member of the Cabinet at the meetings was not appropriate then the motion could be amended.
- The motion was an expression of gratitude to the work of the trade union movement, here in Bromsgrove and elsewhere. It was highlighted that the lowest paid employees were receiving the real living wage. The unions had a great tradition of peaceful wage bargaining, representing their members.

In summing up Councillor Rone-Clarke shared his disappointment in the responses he had received, and suggested Members were out of touch in these difficult times. The trade unions had made work places more Covid Secure and if, as had been suggested the Council was already doing so much, he saw no reason why Members should not support the

Motion and could not understand the reasoning behind their refusal to support it. He further clarified that he had written the motion after seeing that another local authority had passed a similar one and it was not one which had been issued at a regional or national level. He believed Members of the Cabinet represented these people as their employers, he had also spoken to a union representative who supported the motion and would be in agreement with it.

On being put to the vote the Motion was lost.

63\2020

**BURCOT LANE REPORT**

Following presentation of the report by the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and a lengthy debate, which included a number of points of order also being raised, a proposal to defer the item was put forward by Councillor R Hunter and seconded by Councillor P McDonald, on being put to the vote it was

**RESOLVED that the item be deferred.**

64\2020

**CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**

The Chairman asked if Members happy to take the confidential minutes as read, without discussion and the need to go into private session. Members were in agreement to put the confidential minutes straight to the vote.

**RESOLVED that the confidential minute of the full Council meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 be agreed as a true record.**

The meeting closed at 8.37 p.m.

Chairman