

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

6TH JULY 2021, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Observers: Councillor G. Denaro – Portfolio Holder for Finance and
Enabling

Officers: Mr. J. Howse, Ms. D. Poole, Ms. B. Talbot, Mr. M. Cox, Mrs
J. Gresham and Mr. J. Galkowski.

1/21 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

A nomination for the position of Chairman was received in respect of
Councillor C. Hotham.

RESOLVED that Councillor C. Hotham be appointed as Chairman of the
Board for the ensuing municipal year.

2/21 **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

A nomination for the position of Vice-Chairman was received in respect of
Councillor J. Till.

RESOLVED that Councillor J. Till be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the
Board for the ensuing municipal year.

3/21 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S. Baxter, Councillor
S. Colella and Councillor R. Deeming with Councillor A. English and
Councillor S. Douglas as named substitutes.

4/21 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

Councillor A. Kriss declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 8,
the Waseley Hill Car Parking Motion due to his position as Worcestershire

County Councillor for Beacon. It was decided that Councillor A. Kriss would not need to be exempt from the discussion (see item 8).

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

5/21 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 26TH APRIL 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 26th April 2021 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 26th April 2021 be approved as an accurate record.

6/21 **AIR QUALITY AROUND SCHOOLS - VERBAL UPDATE**

Mr. M. Cox, Technical Services Manager, Worcestershire Regulatory Services presented the update in respect of Air Quality Around Schools and in doing so highlighted the following to Members:

- There were currently three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) identified in Bromsgrove District. These were Redditch Road, Worcester Road and Lickey End. Members were informed that during the monitoring over the last municipal year no exceedances of the national average of elevated levels of nitrogen dioxide had been identified in any of these AQMAs. In addition to this, it was reported that several schools were located close the Worcester Road AQMA however no exceedances were identified by monitoring. The AQMA at Lickey End did have a number of nurseries nearby however these were not significantly impacted by air quality.
- The responsibility of active travel plans lay with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and there were currently no plans to work with schools in respect of air quality as there were no concerns in respect of air quality around schools.
- The topography of an area could be a contributing factor when measuring air quality in any location. Members were informed that high-sided buildings located close to a road could increase poor air quality.
- That currently an improving picture in respect of air-quality was emerging across the District.

Members thanked Mr. M Cox for the information provided in the presentation and queried the following:

- The AQMA area at Worcester Road/ Hanover Street was a particularly busy area and many school children used this route on their way to and from school. How was the impact measured for those who use this particular area? It was explained that health-based criteria were used to assess the exposure to poor air quality which included the amount and regularity of exposure. Members were informed that although some users might use the route regularly it would not necessarily result in prolonged and excessive exposure to poor air quality.
- The pollution decrease identified in the District over the past few years could be attributed to the improved technology of vehicles however it was hoped that further investment in alternative travel choices using funding received from the National Productivity Investment Fund would further contribute to lowering of pollution levels.

The Chairman thanked Mr. M. Cox for his presentation, and it was agreed that the data presented within the report be circulated to Members of the Board. It was also suggested that an item in respect of Air Quality be added to the Board's work programme for consideration on an annual basis.

RESOLVED that the Air Quality Around Schools Verbal Update be noted.

7/21

MILEAGE - NOTICE OF MOTION

The Head of Transformation & Organisational Development and the Human Resources & Development Manager presented the item in respect of Staff Mileage. Members were reminded that this further update had been requested in order to provide clarification on amount of staff mileage claimed over the previous municipal year. During consideration of this item the Board was informed that there had been a decrease in the amount of mileage claimed during the Covid-19 pandemic and associated Lockdown and that this had continued a trend which had been seen over the previous municipal years. Further to this, it was explained that following extensive consultation with Trade Unions, the collective agreement had been changed and the Essential Car Users Allowance (ECUA) removed and would no longer be paid to employees from May 2021.

The Chairman invited Councillor G. Denaro, who was in attendance as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling, to comment further on the report.

He stated that there had been an encouraging downward trend in the amount of staff mileage costs over the years.

Councillor P. McDonald, who had submitted the original motion to Full Council, queried the decrease compared to other local authorities and whether the data provided had been bench-marked to other Councils. Officers reported that benchmarking had not been undertaken however, they agreed to carry out an exercise with other comparable, local authorities. Although Members were in agreement that this kind of benchmarking exercise be carried out some Members felt that caution should be exercised to ensure that appropriate Councils were used as a comparison.

The Executive Director for Resources explained to Members that the figures provided to Members as part of the agenda had been extracted from the staff payroll system were solely for Bromsgrove employees and excluded Worcestershire Regulatory Services. He also noted that any further benchmarking should be proportionate to the amounts involved, which in the case of mileage costs were relatively low.

The Chairman thanked Officers for the report, and it was confirmed that the item would be considered again once the benchmarking exercise had been completed and the information available.

RESOLVED that the Mileage - Notice of Motion report be noted.

8/21

MOTION - WASELEY HILLS CAR PARKING

The Chairman invited Councillor P. McDonald to introduce the item in respect of the Motion regarding Waseley Hills Car Parking which had been referred from a Full Council meeting held on 21st April 2021.

Councillor P. McDonald explained that he felt that the charges applied at the Waseley Hills Country Park were unfair to the residents of Worcestershire particularly as no other park in Worcestershire was subject to these kinds of charges. He suggested that a Task Group be undertaken to investigate the reasons for these charges within the Waseley Hills Country Park.

The Chairman, although he understood the concern, felt that this was a Worcestershire County Council (WCC) matter and not something that the District Council had any control over. He expressed that he was disappointed that the Motion had been referred from Full Council to the Board as there was little that could be done to influence County Council policy.

During a detailed discussion it was highlighted by Members that a large proportion of visitors to the Waseley Hills Country Park were from outside of the County and that in order to encourage local residents, particularly in Rubery, where the Country Park was located, a scheme could be established whereby residents be provided with a pass in order to park with no charges. This could be facilitated through the use of WCC waste permits that were already in use in the County. Although this was considered a possibility it was thought by some Members that it would be more equitable if all visitors, no matter where they had travelled from, were permitted to use the car parking for free.

It was proposed that a letter be written, on behalf of the Board, to WCC to express the concerns raised by Members. There were several options proposed as to the content of the letter and whether it should include the proposals regarding schemes that might be implemented. However, after being put to the vote, it was agreed that the content of the letter should be general and query why the charges were in place at Waseley Hills and not in other parks within the County, and that residents were being unfairly treated by having to pay these charges.

RESOLVED that a letter be written on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Board expressing concerns as highlighted in the preamble above.

9/21

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman introduced the Finance and Budget Working Group Update and informed Members that there had no meetings of the Group since the last meeting of the Board.

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

10/21

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Board was advised that the membership of the Corporate Performance Working Group, including the Chairman of the group, needed to be confirmed. Two Councillors volunteered to be members of this group for the next municipal year however the Board were informed that the Terms of Reference stated that the group should consist of a maximum of 5 Members with a quorum of 3.

The Democratic Services Officer present undertook to email all Members of the Board in order see if there were further volunteers to sit on the group. It was confirmed that any further information would be reported back at the next meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED that Corporate Performance Working Group Update be noted.

11/21 **TASK GROUP UPDATES**

The Board were informed that as there were no Task Groups currently being undertaken there were no updates to report.

RESOLVED that the Task Group Updates be noted.

12/21 **WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE**

Members were informed that the nominations were required in order to appoint the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC). Councillor J. Till, who had previously been the representative explained that she did not wish to continue in the role for the ensuing municipal year. However, she had undertaken recent training and due was happy to attend the next meeting of HOSC which was due to take place on 19th July 2021.

The Democratic Services Officer present undertook to email a request for volunteers as the Council's HOSC representative to Members of the Board and an update be provided at the next meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED that Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Update be noted.

13/21 **CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

Officers explained that there had been a number of changes to the Cabinet Work Programme which would result in changes to the Board's Work Programme.

It was highlighted that the Update on Open Spaces Report which had been requested by Members at the Board meeting held in March 2021 and appeared on the work programme would now be a more formal report considered by Cabinet at their next meeting and would be available for the Board to pre-scrutinise.

Members queried the inclusion of the Bromsgrove Centres Manager – 2021 Action Plan and it was confirmed that this item was still due to be considered by the Board however the title had been amended and was now entitled Bromsgrove Town Centre Management Strategy – 2021 Action Plan.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet work Programme be noted.

14/21

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Board's Work Programme was considered as part of the previous item.

RESOLVED that the Board's Work Programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.26 p.m.

Chairman

This page is intentionally left blank