

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**3RD NOVEMBER 2021, AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors H. J. Jones (Chairman), S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, G. N. Denaro, S. P. Douglas, A. B. L. English, M. Glass, S. G. Hession, C.A. Hotham, R. J. Hunter, R. E. Jenkins (From Minute Item No. 52/21), A. D. Kriss, L. C. R. Mallett, K.J. May, M. Middleton, P. M. McDonald, S. A. Robinson, H. D. N. Rone-Clarke, M. A. Sherrey, C. J. Spencer, P.L. Thomas, M. Thompson, J. Till, K. J. Van Der Plank and P. J. Whittaker

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, J Howse, Mrs. C. Felton,  
Mrs. R. Bamford and Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill

43\21 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors S. Baxter, A. Beaumont, A. Kent, J. King, R. Laight and S. Webb. Council was also advised that Councillor R. Jenkins would be arriving late.

In the absence of both the Chairman and the Vice Chairman, Councillor H. Jones was nominated as Chairman for the meeting.

44\21 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors C. Hotham, A. Kriss, M. Middleton, P. Thomas and J. Till declared pecuniary interests in Minute Item No. 52/21 – Recommendations from Cabinet – Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 – due to their position, or their spouse’s position, as private sector landlords. They left the room during consideration of this item and took no part in the debate or vote thereon.

45\21 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 29TH SEPTEMBER 2021**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2021 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2021 be approved as a true and correct record.

46\21 **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE**

Members were advised that, since the previous meeting of Council, the Chairman’s consort, Mrs Lynne Laight, had passed away. In addition, Members were informed that former District Councillor, Alan Dent, had

also passed away. Members paid their respects by observing a minute's silence in their memory.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that there were no announcements on behalf of the Head of Paid Service on this occasion.

47\21 **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader confirmed that she had no announcements to make on this occasion.

48\21 **TO RECEIVE COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Council was informed that no comments, questions or petitions had been received from the public for consideration at the meeting.

49\21 **URGENT DECISIONS**

Members were advised that two urgent decisions had been taken since the previous meeting of Council, on the subject of the Worcestershire Business Rates Pool and the Waste Collection crew. These urgent decisions had been published on the Council's website and were not subject to debate at the meeting.

During consideration of this item, concerns were raised about the frequency with which urgent decisions were taken at the Council. Whilst it was recognised that urgent decisions had been necessary during the lockdown period of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was commented that, following the return to meetings in person, it should be easier to arrange for decisions to be taken at Council meetings. Officers were urged to consider the frequency with which urgent decisions occurred and Members were asked to note that there might be a need to hold more frequent meetings of Council in order to reduce the need for urgent decisions.

50\21 **RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CONSTITUTION REVIEW WORKING GROUP**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling presented a report detailing the background to a recommendation that had been made at a recent meeting of the Constitution Review Working Group. Members were advised that the group had discussed the membership arrangements for the Climate Change Working Group during this meeting. The subject had been discussed, following comments at the previous Council meeting raising concerns about the performance of the Climate Change Working Group. There was recognition that the Climate Change Working Group needed to be effective, due to the importance of taking action to tackle climate change. The Constitution Review Working Group had concluded that a change to the membership of the Climate Change Working Group, to ensure that this reflected, though did

not form part of the formal political balance at the Council, would help to ensure that the group worked effectively.

During the Constitution Review Working Group meeting, reference had also been made to the terms of reference for the Climate Change Working Group. Members had suggested a number of changes that could be made to strengthen the work of the Climate Change Working Group, including a restriction on the number of times a member of the group could send a substitute to attend meetings in his/her absence. The Climate Change Working Group would be reviewing its terms of reference at the next meeting of the group and all of the suggestions that had been made by members of the Constitution Review Working Group would be considered at that meeting.

Council subsequently discussed the proposal to change the membership of the Climate Change Working Group in some detail. Members commented that during the international COP26 summit the Council needed to demonstrate its commitment to tackling climate change. Concerns were raised by some Members about the effectiveness of the Climate Change Working Group to date and it was suggested that action needed to be taken to improve the output from this group in order to have a constructive impact on tackling climate change moving forward. The Climate Change Working Group had existed for 2 years but recommendations had only been made by the group relatively recently. It was suggested that a change to the membership of the group might help to ensure that recommendations were brought forward more frequently in future.

However, concerns were also expressed by some Members about the proposed changes to the membership of the Climate Change Working Group. It was noted that attendance at meetings of the group had varied over time, but some Members had consistently attended meetings and suggested items for discussion. The suggestion was made that, whilst action needed to be taken to improve the performance of the Climate Change Working Group, the proposed action would not necessarily result in the outcomes intended.

Members noted that a reduction in the total number of members of the Climate Change Working Group to 9 Councillors would inevitably result in a reduction in the number of Members from opposition groups who could serve on the Working Group, as only one member would be appointed from each of these groups. However, it was confirmed that interested Members who were not appointed to the Climate Change Working Group would be permitted to attend meetings to observe proceedings.

During consideration of this item, questions were raised about the rationale for proposing that there should be 9 Members in total appointed to the Climate Change Working Group. The suggestion was made that there should be greater flexibility in terms of the total number of Councillors appointed to the group. In addition, some Members

questioned the need to set the membership of the Climate Change Working Group to reflect the political balance, given that this was not a legal requirement for informal working groups.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 18.3 a recorded vote was taken and the voting was as follows:

Members voting FOR the resolution:

Councillors R. Deeming, G. Denaro, M. Glass, S. Hession, R. Hunter, A. Kriss, K. May, M. Middleton, S. Robinson, M. Sherrey, C. Spencer, P. Thomas, M. Thompson, J. Till and P. Whittaker (15).

Members voting AGAINST the resolution:

Councillors S. Colella, S. Douglas, A. English, L. Mallett, P. McDonald, H. Rone-Clarke and K. Van Der Plank (7).

Members voting to ABSTAIN on the resolution:

Councillor C. Hotham (1).

**RESOLVED** that the membership of the Climate Change Working Group should be amended to reflect the political balance and there should be a total of 9 Members appointed to the group.

51\21

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

The Leader confirmed that Councillor H. Jones had been appointed to the vacant position for the Conservative Group arising from Councillor M. Thompson's appointment to the Cabinet. In addition, Councillor M. Glass had been appointed as a named substitute for the Board in place of Councillor S. Hession.

During consideration of this item, reference was also made to the membership of the Planning Committee. The Leader advised that Councillor C. Spencer was being appointed to the Committee to replace Councillor S. Hession. Members were also advised that Councillors M. Glass, A. Kriss and M. Thompson were being added to the Conservative Group's list of named substitutes for the Committee. In addition, Councillor R. Hunter informed Council that he was being appointed as an additional named substitute for the Liberal Democrat Group on the Planning Committee.

52\21

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET**

**Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling Services presented a report on the subject of the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private

Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020. Members were advised that this recent legislation introduced a requirement for all privately rented properties to have an electrical installation safety check every 5 years, similar to the requirement already applicable to Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs). Under the terms of the legislation, landlords were required to have undertaken a safety check by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. Where the safety check identified any failure of electrical safety standards, the landlord was required to notify the local authority, to provide a copy of the report and to submit evidence demonstrating that they had addressed the issues within 28 days of the failures being identified. Members were informed that, to date, this appeared to be taking place as required.

The legislation included the provision to impose penalty charges for non-compliance by landlords in addition to the local authority undertaking work in default if necessary. The penalty charge structure that had been proposed by Officers would be for landlords to pay £1,000 for a first offence and £3,000 per offence for any subsequent offences. This penalty charge structure had been determined in conjunction with other Worcestershire authorities as a level sufficient to present a deterrence to non-compliance but unlikely to justify an appeal. Members were advised that the Government had set a maximum charge that could be levied in instances where a portfolio landlord who would be expected to be informed of statutory standards applying to rented accommodation, or engaging reputable agents for managing their properties, had consistently failed to address electrical safety in a number of their properties. The fee proposed for subsequent offences by Officers would be proportionate in cases involving a single property or a small portfolio landlord failing in his or her legal duties and who were less likely to risk further breaches.

The recommendation detailed in the report was proposed by Councillor G. Denaro and seconded by Councillor M. Sherrey.

Members subsequently discussed the report and in so doing welcomed the introduction of a change in legislation that would have a positive impact on the safety of tenants in the private rented sector.

During consideration of this item, an amendment was proposed by Councillor R. Hunter which was seconded by Councillor S. Robinson. The amendment was as follows:

*“Instead of capping the penalty for second offences at £3,000 the Council should set a cap of £29,000.”*

In proposing the amendment, Councillor Hunter explained that he was concerned that Officers were proposing to cap the charge for later offences at £3,000 when the legislation permitted Councils to charge up to £30,000. The charges would be levied against landlords who had been found guilty of serious breaches of electrical safety standards. This had implications for the safety of tenants in their homes. Councillor

Hunter commented that a recent National Housing Survey had found that 30% of houses in the private rented sector in the country had serious electrical safety issues and if these figures were similar at the local level this was very concerning. It was acknowledged that there were many good landlords in the private rented sector but the higher charge would not impact on these landlords. The lower fee level for first offences also appeared to be reasonable at £1,000. However, Councillor Hunter concluded that a penalty charge capped at £29,000 for subsequent offences would act as more of a deterrent to landlords who did breach safety standards than a charge of £3,000.

Council subsequently discussed the proposed amendment in detail and in the process, questions were raised about the reasons why the authority would not choose to cap the charge for serial offences at close to the legal limit of £30,000. Members noted that action that could be taken to encourage landlords to ensure their properties were compliant with electrical safety standards was important as this had implications for the safety of residents.

On being put to the vote the amendment was carried.

The original proposal having been proposed and seconded and the amendment carried, the Chairman's decision to move to the next item of business without further debate confirmed that the original proposal, incorporating the amendment as carried, was taken and agreed.

**RESOLVED** that, subject to capping the penalty for second offences at £29,000, the proposed financial penalty charges for non-compliance are adopted and the respective enforcement powers of the Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 are delegated to the Head of Community and Housing Services.

(Prior to consideration of this item, Councillors C. Hotham, A. Kriss, M. Middleton, P. Thomas and J. Till declared pecuniary interests due to their position, or their spouse's position, as private sector landlords. They left the room and took no part in the debate or vote thereon.)

### **Mobile Homes Act 2013 – Introduction of Licensing Fees**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling presented a report detailing the proposed introduction of licensing fees under the Mobile Homes Act 2013. Members were informed that there was a licensing duty in respect of mobile home parks. The Council, as the licensing authority, incurred costs in relation to the licensing regime, including action taken in respect of compliance. The licensing fees would help to cover the costs of the work undertaken by the Council in respect of this matter and help provide Officers with the power to take action on licence conditions.

During consideration of this item, concerns were raised about the fees that would be paid by mobile home residents living on smaller mobile

home park sites and the potential for annual inspection fees to be passed down to residents. Members commented that this would represent an additional fee for residents who would already be paying for utilities and potentially Council Tax contributions. In this context, it was suggested that it might be appropriate only to charge mobile homes a fee where sites consisted of 4 or more homes, so that the costs could be shared. However, Members were informed that the costs were not due to be passed down to residents in mobile homes. In addition, the Council often had to spend more time working on compliance issues associated with smaller sites than at large mobile home parks, which were managed by experienced management companies and that tended to be familiar with regulatory requirements.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor G. Denaro and seconded by Councillor M. Sherrey.

**RESOLVED** that

- (1) the Mobile Home Fee Structure is approved and implemented to all relevant sites throughout Bromsgrove District reviewed on an annual basis; and
- (2) the recovery of expenses through enforcement action is approved and implemented to all relevant sites throughout the District.

### **Bromsgrove District Council's Duty to Co-operate Statement with Solihull**

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cultural Services and Community Safety presented a report on the subject of Bromsgrove District Council's Duty to Co-operate Statement of Common Ground with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council. The report detailed the implications of the Solihull Local Plan for Bromsgrove District and the response that had been provided by Bromsgrove District Council. This included raising concerns about the impact of developments proposed in the Solihull Local Plan on parts of Bromsgrove District, particularly the infrastructure implications in Wythall. Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council had accepted many of the points raised by Bromsgrove District Council and these had been raised with the Planning Inspector.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor P. Thomas and seconded by Councillor K. May.

**RESOLVED** that the Statement of Common Ground is signed by the Leader of the Council and submitted to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council.

### **Bromsgrove District Council's Approach to the Draft Black Country Plan**

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cultural Services and Community Safety presented a report detailing the Council's approach to the draft

Black Country Plan. The Draft Black Country Plan had been developed for a number of Councils based in the Black Country region. Bromsgrove District Council had considered the housing development proposals recorded in the plan as well as the implications for Bromsgrove District. This had included comments regarding the infrastructure implications of a development north of the District's border, close to Hagley. Bromsgrove District Council had concluded that further work was needed on the plan to address these concerns.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor P. Thomas and seconded by Councillor K. May.

**RESOLVED** that the Council endorses the officer response to the Draft Black Country Plan and that it is confirmed with the Black Country Authorities as such.

### **Catshill and Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan Adoption**

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cultural Services and Community Safety presented the Catshill and Marlbrook Neighbourhood Plan for Members' consideration. Council was advised that this represented the last stage of the neighbourhood plan adoption process. The draft neighbourhood plan had previously been considered and endorsed by Cabinet earlier in 2021. The examiner had considered the content of the draft plan and had been satisfied, subject to a few minor amendments. The neighbourhood plan had subsequently been the subject of a local referendum in which 88% of electors had voted in support of using the plan. Members thanked the local residents who took part in the referendum for their support together with Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Council for their hard work on developing the neighbourhood plan.

During consideration of this item, reference was made to the next stage in the process, in terms of the adoption of the Catshill Neighbourhood Plan. Members were informed that, subject to Council agreement to adopt the plan, the plan would start to be enacted.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor P. Thomas and seconded by Councillor J. Till.

**RESOLVED** that the Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Neighbourhood Plan be 'made' (formally adopted) immediately, in accordance with the relevant legislation.

53\21

### **TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 20TH OCTOBER 2021**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021 were noted.

During consideration of this item, reference was made to Minute Item No. 27/21, concerning the debate in respect of Bromsgrove District Council's Approach to the Draft Black Country Plan. Questions were raised about whether this minute provided clarity about the debate at Cabinet in respect of the Council's response to the black country authorities, especially in relation to the proposed development outside the District's borders, north of Hagley. Members were advised that the Cabinet minutes had not yet been approved by the Cabinet and the accuracy of the minutes would need to be discussed at Cabinet.

54\21

### **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

The Chairman explained that 9 Questions on Notice had been received for consideration at the meeting. These questions would be considered in the order in which they had been received. There would be no supplementary questions.

#### **Question submitted by Councillor P. McDonald**

"How many employees are being paid less than the Living Wage Foundation's £9.50?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling responded by explaining that the Council paid the Foundation Living Wage, which was set at £9.50 per hour. There were no employees who were being paid less than £9.50, other than one apprentice post, which was being paid at the appropriate apprentice rate for the age of the employee. This was in line with the national apprentice pay rates.

#### **Question submitted by Councillor C. Hotham**

"This council has five strategic purposes. Three make no mention of climate change. Of the remaining two, there is a brief mention of making recycling easier and improving home energy efficiency. There is also a brief vague mention of a "green thread" running through council policy. I don't think this now demonstrates sufficient commitment to fighting climate change. We have a newly appointed Climate Change Cabinet Member, a climate change working group and a general strong consensus across the council that time is running out and that now is the time to act.

Does the Climate Change Cabinet Member agree with me that tackling climate change should become a strategic purpose of this council in its own right and will he undertake to make sure this happens?"

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change commented that he was delighted that the importance of climate change had been highlighted. The Council had agreed that the 'green thread' should run throughout the Council Plan, as it was not something that stood on its own. Responsibility for climate change cut across all services and portfolios and was something that everyone had responsibility for, as opposed to

being a distinct stand-alone purpose. In this respect, the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change had a co-ordinating role across all of the strategic purposes.

The Council was fully committed to the authority's climate change duties and as such the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change invited Councillor Hotham to highlight this again when the Council Plan was due a review in a year's time.

**Question submitted by Councillor S. Baxter**

"Please could the leader provide an update on the redistribution of the many surplus Council ipads to schools."

The Leader responded by commenting that in April 2021, contact was made with Worcestershire Children First, which was responsible for the delivery of services to children and young people in Worcestershire. Worcestershire Children First were offered Members' old ipads for distribution amongst children attending local schools. In response, the Council was advised that there was no scheme operated for this purpose by Worcestershire Children First. However, they suggested that contact be made with the social enterprise NewStarts about donation of the equipment, as NewStarts operated a recycling scheme where they repurposed donated laptops. Following consultation with the Leader, it was subsequently determined that the ipads would be donated to NewStarts for this purpose and this occurred in early June 2021.

**Question submitted by Councillor S. Robinson**

"Bus Shelters

Please could the cabinet member update council on its bus shelter improvement programme and advise us what are the implications of the county council's plan to adopt district owned shelters? Will all our shelters be transferred and will the improvements BDC budgeted for this year still go ahead?"

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services explained that it was understood that the County Council were considering taking responsibility for bus shelters across the County. However, Bromsgrove District Council had not received a formal approach from Worcestershire County Council on this subject. Therefore, the Engineering and Design Team were continuing with the programme and had just procured a contractor to supply the new bus shelters. Work on site for preparation of the first 4 bus shelters was scheduled to start before Christmas, weather permitting, and would be carried out by the Council's Minor Works Team and the authority's Civil Engineering contractor. Work on a further 4 bus shelters would then be undertaken between January and March 2022, weather permitting. A small number of other sites might be replaced during the financial year if the budget allowed."

**Question submitted by Councillor R. Hunter**

“Swimming Pools

A recent report by Swim England called ‘A Decade of Decline: The Future of Swimming Pools in England’ reveals the shocking potential for a huge reduction in the availability of public swimming pools nationally by the end of the decade. It predicts that the number of public pools in England could fall by as much as 40 percent, the equivalent of almost 2,000 pools. What reassurance can you offer this council that the future provision of public swimming in Bromsgrove is in safe hands and that we will not see local services diminished as part of this worrying national trend?”

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Cultural Services and Community Safety advised that consultants were in the process of developing a leisure strategy for the Council. Amongst other things, the information compiled to inform this strategy, would include an understanding of the provision of and demand for swimming facilities available to residents. It was important to note that Bromsgrove town was very fortunate to have a modern, recently constructed swimming provision. This was in contrast to many of the swimming pools in England referred to in the “decade of decline” document. In addition, Council had worked cross party throughout the pandemic and beyond to ensure that these facilities were sustainable and continued to deliver the very best for the residents of the District at a time when their health and well-being was so important.”

**Question submitted by Councillor J. King**

“What practical support is this council offering to the 5,000 low income Universal Credit claimants in this district who became £20 a week poorer in October?”

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling responded by explaining that the benefits section at Bromsgrove District Council were committed to supporting residents who were struggling financially both in the short and long term. The Council had a dedicated Financial Independence Team (FIT) who could help with a number of areas of support (for example income maximisation, benefit take up, budgeting advice as well as being able to signpost to other specialist agencies and partners.)

The authority administered a range of benefits to support residents: Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Discretionary Housing Payments and Council Tax Hardship Payments. The Council also had an Essential Living Fund (ELF) scheme which could help with a wide range of costs such as utility costs, food parcels and supermarket vouchers.

Further details and contact information were provided in a leaflet entitled “Income Extra”, a copy of which would be circulated to all Members after the meeting.

**Question submitted by Councillor K. Van Der Plank**

“Please can we have an update on the new mobile CCTV cameras that were promised to help tackle fly tipping. What other measures have been introduced to tackle fly tipping since the motion we passed in 2019 and how many convictions have we now had?”

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services explained that she would respond to the question in two parts.

Firstly, in terms of the update on new mobile CCTV cameras to help tackle fly tipping, she confirmed that these were purchased at the start of the financial year and had been used successfully at several of the hotspot locations in the District so far. They were rotated around based on where the most active locations were. The Council was reviewing future enforcement arrangements and expected to be submitting a bid for funding to purchase additional cameras to build on this in 2022.

Secondly, in relation to other measures to tackle fly tipping since 2019 and the number of convictions, Members were informed that the Council was part of a North Worcestershire bid via the partnership for funding from the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner to support landowners with fly tipping on private land over the following two years. This would involve a media campaign, bespoke signage, education on how to deter this type of activity, and a number of additional cameras to support direct monitoring and catch those responsible. The Council was anticipating that a decision would be announced on this shortly.

The Council had significantly increased signage across the District, including the main gateways into the area from the North and North East, in order to deter those coming from outside of the District to dump fly tipped items. So far during the 2021/22 financial year, the Council had issued 12 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for fly-tipped waste using footage from these cameras and had several cases that were being worked up and progressed through the Courts for prosecution. The Council was working up a press campaign to publicise this as an additional deterrent for others considering fly tipping in the District and any unpaid FPNs would be escalated through the Court Process as required.

Fly Tipping numbers had reduced across the District on average by 100 per month in comparison with 2020, and the Council had also seen changes in behaviour around fly tipping that supported the view that many of those responsible were aware of the increased scrutiny

**Question submitted by Councillor A. English**

“Could we please have an update on the Government grant for insulating park homes? How much did BDC receive and how many homes have been insulated as result?”

The Leader advised that the Council, as part of a consortium with the five other local authorities in Worcestershire, had applied for funding from the Green Homes Grant Scheme – Local Authority Delivery phase 1a scheme (LADs 1a). The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) advised that the consortium was successful in its application on the 1st October 2020, with all works and claims to be made by the 31st October 2021.

The Council's proposal was to undertake external wall insulation (EWI) to park homes within the District where occupiers met the eligibility criteria and Bromsgrove District Council was able to claim up to a maximum of £439,150 capital and £9,000 revenue for the delivery of works. This was a complex proposal requiring the Council to procure, through a compliant tender, a Trustmark registered contractor and a managing agent, both of whom were required to be in place to deliver the scheme. Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, there were a number of factors which presented as challenges, including supply chain issues, and difficulties in securing the availability of suitable tradespersons. The timeframes within which the works had to be completed and validated claims lodged resulted in the number of park homes completions not meeting the expected spend.

One park home site was selected in order that time and materials could be used most efficiently, and the scheme was able to complete and fund EWI and ancillary works to 16 park homes. The costs of the capital and ancillary works which the Council claimed for was £216,868.37 capital and also £9,000 for the project delivery costs. This equated to 49% of the available funding being claimed and received. It had been confirmed that this underspend was comparable with the other Worcestershire local authorities' claims, and also nationally for LADS 1a.

#### **Question submitted by Councillor H. Rone-Clarke**

“Given that Bromsgrove prides itself on its ‘night-time economy’, the rise in incidents of spiking, particularly and disturbingly, with needles should concern us all greatly. What steps can BDC take to regulate against these attacks and will the leader commit to them now?”

The Leader responded by commenting that Bromsgrove was proud of its diverse night-time economy which served residents of the town and people from further afield. The allegations that had been made in some of the larger cities were concerning but the Leader explained that West Mercia Police had advised that there were no confirmed cases of drink spiking involving needles or otherwise in Bromsgrove. One allegation (not involving needles) was made several weeks ago but this had not been confirmed. West Mercia Police took any such allegations seriously and would investigate thoroughly. Members were asked to encourage any resident with information about such offences or, in the case of a resident believing they had been a victim of drink spiking, to report it to West Mercia Police as soon as possible and in an emergency to dial 999.

With regard to steps Bromsgrove District Council could take, the Leader had been advised by the Licensing Team at Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) that this issue had been raised at Bromsgrove Pubwatch and that all members of the group had been asked to be particularly vigilant in relation to this concerning activity. Also, via Safer Bromsgrove and the Town Centre Management Group, all agencies and bodies engaged with the night time economy, including operators, were fully alive to this issue and were actively monitoring and discussing various prevention opportunities. Whilst there had been no confirmed cases of spiking in the District partners were not complacent and were working closely with premises' license holders and their designated premises supervisors to ensure all reasonable steps were being taken to prevent this practice, as part of their duty to prevent crime and disorder under the Licensing Act 2003.

Members were reminded that the Licensing Act and its associated regime were designed to be permissive so, in the absence of evidence, the Council and other partners in their roles as responsible authorities could not apply blanket conditions to premises without evidence of issues specifically arising there. Officers of the Council and their colleagues at West Mercia Police would continue to encourage businesses to take steps to limit the potential impact of this national concern and any further allegations would be subject to considerable scrutiny by all relevant agencies.

55\21

**MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

The Chairman explained that prior to Council the Group Leaders had met to discuss the Motions. Group Leaders had agreed that the first Motion submitted for Members' consideration by Councillor H. Rone-Clarke should be referred to the Monitoring Officer and would not be debated during the meeting. In addition, Group Leaders had agreed that the second Motion submitted by Councillor S. Robinson would be referred to the Finance and Budget Working Group for discussion as part of the budget setting process and would not be debated at the meeting. Consequently, there were no Motions to debate at the meeting.

56\21

**TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD OF LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROPERTY 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**

The Chairman advised that Councillor C. Hotham had requested that Council should consider an item of urgent business in respect of the discharge of sewage into waterways. In line with the constitution requirements, advice had been taken from officers and whilst there were concerns regarding the recent reports that sewage might be entering the

District's waterways and the impact that this might have on the people and wildlife of the District, the responsibility for this function fell to a number of external agencies.

Therefore, Councillor Hotham had been advised that Officers from the Council and North Worcestershire Water Management would urgently establish a multi-agency review into the issues that had been identified.

The meeting closed at 7.38 p.m.

Chairman