

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

MONDAY 17TH JANUARY 2022, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors C.A. Hotham (Chairman), J. Till, S. J. Baxter, A. J. B. Beaumont, S. R. Colella, R. J. Deeming, R. J. Hunter, H. J. Jones, P. M. McDonald, C. J. Spencer and M. Glass (Substitute)

Observers: Councillor K. May – Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Strategic Partnerships
Councillor G. Denaro – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling.

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks (via Microsoft Teams), Mrs. S. Hanley, Mr. J. Howse (via Microsoft Teams) Mr. G. Revans (via Microsoft Teams), Mr. K. Hirons (via Microsoft Teams) and Mr O. Paparega (via Microsoft Teams) and Mrs. J Gresham.

52/21

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A. Kriss with Councillor M. Glass in attendance as named substitute.

53/21

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

There were no Declarations of Interest nor of any Party Whip.

54/21

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL CAR PARKS - ADOPTION OF CASHLESS PAYMENTS AND OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES FOR RECREATION ROAD SOUTH CAR PARK AND CHURCHFIELDS MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Chairman invited Councillor K. May, who was in attendance in her role as Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Strategic Partnerships, to present the Bromsgrove District Council Car Parks - Adoption of Cashless Payments and Operational Procedures for Recreation Road South Car Park and Churchfields Multi-Storey Car Park report. In doing so, the Board were informed that it was recommended that all Pay and Display car parks within the Town Centre were to adopt a cashless payment system. It was confirmed that in addition to the cashless payment option all car parks, except for

Churchfields Multi-storey Car Park would retain one machine that would still accept cash payments. Members were advised that the decision to not have a machine that accepted cash payments at the Churchfields Muti-Storey car park was as a result of anti-social behaviour that had previously been experienced at this site.

The Environmental Services Manager, Mr. K. Hirons was welcomed to meeting to provide further information regarding the report to the Board. During which the following was highlighted for Members' attention:

- That the negotiations with a third party to take over the running and maintenance of the Recreation Road South Car Park had not been successful.
- The Mi Permit app had been introduced within the Town's car parks in 2021. This had provided flexibility to shoppers who visited the Town Centre.
- A full Equality Impact Assessment had been undertaken by the Council and the results of the survey had shown that 62% of users would use a cashless payment option and that 38% of users would not. This had resulted in the decision that a cash payment option be retained in most car parks and therefore minimise the potential discrimination for certain groups.
- The benefit of the introduction of cashless payments would allow the Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) within the District to undertake more of their normal enforcement duties as they would be able to check on the viability of each vehicles' parking period electronically rather than having to visually inspect tickets which was the current process. It was also reported that a cost saving of £10.5k on cash collections and £4.5k on the cost of ticket supplies would be made by the Council as a result of these changes.

Following the presentation there was a detailed debate regarding the implementation of cashless payments and the potential impact on the residents within the District and further afield. Although Members welcomed the report there was some concern expressed regarding the lack of availability of cash payments at the Churchfields Multi-Storey Car Park and that this might preclude some visitors from using the car park. In addition to this it was considered that it might be considered unfair to have a cheaper payment of a £3 all day parking fee at the Churchfields Multi-Storey Car Park when using the Mi Permit app whilst the remaining car parks charged £5 for all day parking. Some Members wished to explore the possibility of keeping

a cash payment option within this car park for those who were unable to use the Mi Permit app.

During the debate heritage street lighting within the Town Centre was discussed at length and some Members queried whether there would be a consistent approach in respect of the replacement of heritage street lighting in the future. It was explained to Members that the street lighting within the boundary of the heritage area of the town centre would be replaced by heritage street lighting however this would not be the case of street lighting outside of the heritage boundary.

During consideration of this item the following was also discussed by Members:

- Solar powered parking machines – Although some Members were pleased that some of the parking machines would be solar powered there was some concern that not all of them would be. Officers confirmed that the reason for this was that when making card payments a large battery charge was required and after looking at other Local Authorities who had opted to use solar powered parking machines it was discovered that these kinds of machines were not always consistently reliable.
- The resale price of the old machines that were no longer needed - it was reported that it was difficult to estimate what the potential resale price would be as this was dependent on market need.
- The sum of investment for the Council would be £1m over the next 4 years, with £250k of that amount being spent by the end of the 2021/22 Financial Year
- Life-expectancy of the replacement machines – although it was difficult to provide a definitive life-expectancy of the new machines it was hoped that this would be 10 years.

As a result of consideration of the report, Councillor R. Hunter proposed the following amendment to the recommendation, which was seconded by Councillor P. McDonald:

That in addition to the cashless payment option at Churchfields Multi-Storey Car Park a cash payment option also be made available to the users of the car park.

Officers confirmed to Members that this proposal would increase costs at the Churchfields site and that the cost of installing two machines was £10k. In addition to this, any resulting costs of the installation of two machines would be higher due to the ongoing maintenance or if one or both machines were subject to vandalism.

On being put to the vote the recommendation was lost.

In respect of the discussion regarding heritage lighting Councillor R. Hunter proposed a recommendation as follows:

When any heritage street lighting within the town centre was replaced, it was replaced with the same heritage style lighting.

This proposed recommendation was not seconded.

Councillor K. May suggested that it might be useful to have a heritage lighting discussion at a future meeting of the Finance and Budget Working Group. This was agreed by the Chairman and the item would be added to the Finance and Budget Working Group work programme.

RESOLVED that the Bromsgrove District Council Car Parks - Adoption of Cashless Payments and Operational Procedures for Recreation Road South Car Park and Churchfields Multi-Storey Car Park be noted.

55/21

LEVELLING UP FUND - FORMER MARKET HALL AND WINDSOR ST SITES - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Strategic Partnerships presented the Levelling Up Fund - former Market Hall and Windsor Street site report and advised Members that £14.5m had been awarded from the Levelling Up fund. The Board was informed that some of the funding was to be utilised to develop a cultural and creative hub in Bromsgrove town centre. Prior to the officer presentation Councillor K. May thanked all of the officers involved in putting the successful bid together and stated that this was very exciting and a one-off opportunity for Bromsgrove and its residents.

Mr O. Paparega, Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR), provided further detail regarding the report and its content and in doing so Members' attention was drawn to the following:

- Market Hall site – It was planned that this would be the site of the cultural and creative hub. In addition to this there would be flexible working space provision for start-up businesses and a public art gallery would also be included in the project with the hope of attracting people to the town centre.
- Windsor Street – the project at this site would be pre-development i.e., preparing the site in readiness for development.
- The delivery timescales had recently been revised by Central Government to March 2025, which gave officers an extra 12-months to deliver the projects. However, under the Memorandum of Understanding, there was the possibility that a clawback clause could be triggered by Central Government should any of the funding remain unspent by the new deadline. Additional risks included the costs of the developments and delivery risk including resourcing and supplies. A detailed risk register was in place and would be monitored closely.

The Chairman invited Councillor G. Denaro, who was in attendance in his role as Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling to comment on the report and he reiterated that this was a great opportunity and might alleviate revenue pressures on the Council.

Although some Members were interested in the future of the United Reform Church on the Windsor Street site, they were informed that as it was a privately owned building it was not appropriate to discuss at a public meeting.

Some Members were interested in better understanding what the new role of the Programme Manager at NWEDR would be and whether this resource was already available within NWEDR. It was explained that there was a small team at NWEDR and with such complex projects, a wide spectrum of disciplines and strict deadlines involved it was important to have the correct resourcing available.

During a robust debate the following areas were also discussed by Members:

- Public consultation – Officers confirmed that public consultation would certainly take place at the appropriate time and would be publicised accordingly.
- Funding had been received from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) for the feasibility study for the bid and from Worcestershire County Council (WCC).

- A Feasibility Study was currently underway regarding the clearance of the Windsor Street site.

The Chairman echoed that this was a very exciting opportunity for the District and that he would be interested to see the funding bid that had been submitted in order to measure the success of the implementation. Officers undertook to provide the summary of the bid for the Board's information. Finally, there was discussion regarding the governance of the Programme Board and the Chairman thought that it would be appropriate to have additional elected Members on the Programme Board e.g., the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services. Councillor K. May informed Members that she would speak to the relevant officers to see if this was a possibility and would be happy to include these members on the Programme Board if appropriate.

RESOLVED that Levelling Up Fund - former Market Hall and Windsor Street sites report be noted.

56/21

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman introduced the Finance and Budget Working Group update and informed Members that the last meeting of the Working Group had been a lengthy one. The items considered had included the Council Tax Empty Homes Discounts and Premiums report. Members had been encouraged that there was to be a change in the way Council Tax on empty homes was administered in the future.

In respect of Fees and Charges, the Board was informed that there had been an increase in the cost of memorial benches. However, this was in line with market cost and other Local Authorities. It was explained to the Board that at this meeting there had been discussion regarding gambling licences and the Executive Director Resources explained that the licence fees were set subject to government controls and that the fees collected were kept at a local level.

RESOLVED that the Finance and Budget Working Group be noted.

57/21

TASK GROUP UPDATES

Councillor S. Colella, in his role as Chairman of the Impact of the Library Service Review Task Group informed Members that the Task Group had met once since the last meeting of the Board and that another meeting had been scheduled to take place on 20th January 2022.

RESOLVED that the Task Group Updates be noted.

58/21

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

Councillor S. Baxter provided the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) update and explained that there had been one meeting since the Board had last met. Members were informed that at the meeting Integrated Care Systems (ICS) were considered and what the new systems would mean for patients. It was reported that it was hoped that by implementing ICS there would be a more joined up approach across the County.

The Board were also informed that the last two years had been particularly difficult for critical care but that it was hoped that this would now slowly improve.

Councillor S. Baxter reminded Members that the minutes were circulated by the Democratic Services Officer, and these provided additional detail to the items that were considered at the HOSC meetings.

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

59/21

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman highlighted to Members that the Sustainable Warmth Programme had been added to the work programme since the publication of the agenda and it was agreed that this item would be considered at the next meeting of the Board in February 2022.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Work Programme be noted.

60/21

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Officer presented the item in respect of the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme. In doing so it was confirmed that the reports that had been queried by Councillor R. Hunter at the last meeting of the Board in on 17th November 2021 had been added to the work programme as requested. These items were as follows:

- Land Drainage Watercourse Maintenance Operation – pre-scrutiny
- Housing enforcement powers and how they are used

In addition to this the Democratic Services Officer undertook to make the addition of the Sustainable Warmth Funding as detailed during consideration of the previous item.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme be noted.

61/21

**TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 22ND
NOVEMBER 2021**

The minutes from the previous meeting held on 22nd November 2021 were submitted for consideration by the Board.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Board meeting held on 22nd November 2021 were a true and accurate record.

The meeting closed at 7.40 p.m.

Chairman