

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

MONDAY 30TH MAY 2022, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors C.A. Hotham (Chairman), J. Till (Vice-Chairman), S. J. Baxter, A. J. B. Beaumont, S. R. Colella, A. D. Kriss, P. M. McDonald and C. J. Spencer (present during minute no 1/2022 to minute no. 7/2022)

Observers: Councillor G. N. Denaro (on Microsoft Teams) and Councillor K. J. May and Mr. K. Judd (on Microsoft Teams) (Power BI Project Developer)

Officers: Ms. D. Poole (on Microsoft Teams), Mr J. Howse, Mr P. Carpenter (on Microsoft Teams), Mrs. R. Bamford (on Microsoft Teams), Ms. T. Beech (on Microsoft Teams) and Mr O. Paparega (on Microsoft Teams).

1/2022

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.

2/2022

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.

3/2022

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. Deeming, R. Hunter and H. Jones. There were no named substitutes in attendance.

4/2022

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

There were no declarations of interest nor whipping arrangements on this occasion.

5/2022

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 25TH APRIL 2022

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 25th April 2022 were considered. It was highlighted that Councillor H. Jones, had not been present and her apologies, although given had not been recorded. Officers confirmed that this would be amended.

RESOLVED that subject to the pre-amble above, the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 25th April 2022 be agreed as a true and correct record.

6/2022

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE UPDATE - PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

The Chairman welcomed Ms. D. Poole, Head of Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy, Ms. T. Beech, Policy Officer and Mr. K. Judd, a Power BI Project Developer who is assisting in the development of the new dashboard.

Ms. Poole explained that the current legacy dashboard had a number of technical limitations and a project had been set up to replace this with a modern more up to date dashboard through Power BI, which would improve access to data and the decision-making process. It would initially concentrate on the strategic measures in line with the Council Plan, touching on operational measures as part of the ongoing design. Details of the stages which would lead to the full implementation of the project were provided, and it was further explained that by using Microsoft Power BI which had much more functionality it would allow for the data to be interrogated in a more useful and meaningful way.

Mr. Judd went on to give a presentation showing the development of the dashboard to date and how it was envisaged it would be used. The detailed presentation covered the following areas:

- An overview of how the dashboard would look and how the data could be analysed in greater detail.

- The option to make some areas of the dashboard public and the need for Power BI Licenses.
- The use of internal data and what value this would add – it was demonstrated as to how this could be broken down into greater detail and the view changed to suit the users' needs.
- The visual interaction of the information – including the use of comments to support the data.
- The inclusion of a help button to support the user and guide them through the functionality of the dashboard.
- Mr. Judd used an example of Crime figures, although these were nationally available the dashboard allowed for these to be broken down into more detail, which was relevant to each particular Ward area.
- In respect of operational measures an example of data for fly tipping was provided and this again could be broken down into specific Place Teams and locations.
- Work was currently underway to understand what additional data could help with further analysis.

Following the presentation, the Chairman invited Councillor G. Denaro, as the relevant Portfolio Holder to comment. He said the information that the dashboard would provide would be very useful and the ability to drill down to specific Wards was very positive. Members went on to discuss a number of areas in more detail and officers responded to a number of questions. This included:

- Concerns around some areas (such as the crime records) being duplicated, as these were already available and what actions could be taken once they had the data. Officers advised that although it was national data it would be made more accessible and used to see if it had any bearing on the services offered – this could be analysed in more detail and provide more value to officers in shaping the services provided. It was useful to understand crime rates and to be able to support specific communities affected.
- The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Economic Development commented that the data in respect of housing would be used for monitoring purposes in line with the Local Plan and to ensure that the Council was meeting its objectives. It would also be used to check delivery and included within the annual monitoring report that was completed.
- The cost of the dashboard was also considered – it was noted that a license would cost approximately £68 each. The aim would

be to keep the cost to a minimum and the cost of developing the dashboard was officer time and within the existing budget.

- Members asked for a more detail costing for officer time and Ms. Poole agreed to provide this outside of the meeting.
- Concerns were raised that if all Members were to have a license, then this would be a significant annual cost to the Council. It was suggested that it could be limited to the equipment available for Members' use in the Members' Room, if necessary.
- The Executive Director, Finance and Resources confirmed that the dashboard was currently in its development phase and the scope of it was being built, the resources to fund it and the final costs would be considered in the later stage and be subject to further consideration.
- It was questioned whether the officer time spent on the dashboard's development had impacted on other areas of work within the Council.
- It appeared to be a good system and the importance of being what sat behind the data was discussed. As it was acknowledged that the integrity of the data was paramount to its success and the importance of that data to prevent future problems and make the Council work more effectively.
- The system's interaction with other systems within the Council in order to extract data was discussed.
- It was suggested that a link to an officer within the information provided on the dashboard would also be useful in order to be able to get a more immediate response when a concern or query was raised.
- It was suggested that operational data would be more important for Members - although it was accepted that currently it was focused on strategic measures in line with the Council Plan and that operational measures would be part of the longer term plan for the dashboard.

Ms. Poole confirmed that it was helpful to get feedback from Members and she was happy for any Members to contact her with views and ideas moving forwards. The provision of training for users was discussed and it was hoped that this would be minimal as the system was counter intuitive and guidance, as previously demonstrated, would be provided on screen. Mr. Judd explained that they had already used an officer as a "guinea pig" to help understand what was needed from any training, and this was likely to be at an informal level and currently light touch, but further input was needed to confirm this.

In respect of timescales for implementation of the dashboard it was confirmed that as many areas of the Council as possible would be included at each stage and it was anticipated that it would be rolled out to officers and Councillors by the end of the year. Concerns were raised again about the cost of the development of the dashboard and the importance of the Council ensuring it was value for money. The Executive Director, Finance and Resources reassured Members that it was currently being managed within budget, but this would be monitored on a regular basis.

Ms. Poole confirmed that the current dashboard remained in place and that the new system would replace that system. The previous system was still available but was over a decade old and technically no longer fit for purpose. The new system would use more modern tools for accessing data.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their presentation and hoped the dashboard would be as successful as it appeared. He also asked for the costings to be provided as detailed in the discussions.

7/2022

LEVELLING UP PHASE 1 FUNDING - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Chairman welcomed officers and Mr. P. Carpenter, Interim Head of Finance and Customer Services introduced the report. He explained that it was largely a financial report and that Mrs. Bamford, Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services and Mr. O. Paparega, Head of North Worcestershire Economic Development (NWEDR) had input in respect of the operational side.

Mr. Carpenter provided a reminder in respect of the background to the report and provided an update on progress to date. This included an extension of the deadline by one year and the purchase of Windsor Street site at the end of the previous financial year. The report requested delegated authority to the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services in order to spend up to budgeted sum of £2.266m on the demolition of the Windsor Street site and the engagement of a design and build contractor for the Market Hall site. Members attention was drawn to paragraph 3.6 of the report and the indicative timetable, which Government had extended to 2024/25. It was also noted that formal monitoring was required on a 6 monthly basis.

The Leader provided further details around the award of the Levelling Up funds and it being fundamental to further development across the District. Bromsgrove had received a higher level of funding than other

areas in the county and it was important that the Windsor Street site, which had remained unoccupied for over 2 years was developed as soon as possible.

Following presentation of the report Members discussed a number of areas and officers responded to questions – this included:

- Clarification in respect of the total cost as detailed at paragraph 3.10 of the report and whether this included the purchase price of the Windsor Street site. Officers confirmed that it did include the acquisition cost of the site.
- Details around the Market Hall site and the high level proposals for it were also discussed – these had been provided within the report considered by Cabinet in January 2022. It was confirmed that key stakeholders and organisations would be consulted on the final proposals. There had already been initial research carried out locally to gauge potential interest.
- The type of use and operating models were yet to be finalised and reviews of similar sites and hubs would be considered as part of that process.
- The procurement process would follow the normal procedure followed by the Council and advertised as any other contract would be, so there was the potential for local contractors to apply if they so wished.
- It was noted that the organisational chart within the report needed to be updated.
- Concerns were raised in respect of the inclusion of the amount of £2.266m within recommendation 2 of the report and whether this would work against the Council in receiving a cost effective tender for the work and it was questioned whether this element of the report should have been on private papers. Mr. Paparega commented that it did not mean the cost would be £2.266m but that this was an indicative cost received from the professional team the Council was working with.
- Members discussed the project plan and were concerned that it was being optimistic in respect of the desired planning permission being granted between May and September 2022. Concerns were reiterated around the overall timescales in light of the current national position. The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services responded that the timetable was constantly being reviewed as everyone was concerned about this, she also confirmed that pre-planning discussions would be ongoing in order to iron out any issues prior to planning application being

brought forward. She confirmed that everything was being done to meet the requirements of the monies received.

- The inclusion of the Worcestershire and Birmingham LEP on the Programme Board was questioned when it was understood that they were not making a contribution to the project. The role of One Public Estate was also questioned, and the Leader confirmed that this was part of Worcestershire County Council. Mr. Paparega confirmed that the Birmingham LEP had funded some feasibility work to support the bid and that the LEP position changed on a daily basis and therefore the membership of the Project Board could and would likely change as the project moved forwards.
- Members asked whether there were any restrictive covenants in place in respect of the Windsor Street site – the Leader confirmed that both Worcestershire County Council and the Fire Authority had relinquished all rights to it when it was purchased.
- It was confirmed that the demolition rights and any mitigation costs were covered by the grant funding. It was also confirmed that any other remediation costs for the site in required outside of the site would fall to WCC and the Fire Authority (as detailed in the contract).
- It was suggested that although the Leader was a member of the Programme Board there should also be another Councillor in attendance. The Leader confirmed that Councillors would be consulted at the appropriate stages.
- The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services reminded Members that Ward Councillors could also be involved in the pre-application process.

Following detailed discussion around the wording of recommendation 2 of the report Members agreed that it would be more appropriate to amend this to “up to a total of” rather than as was currently stated. It was also discussed that an update in respect of progress should be reported back to the Board on a quarterly basis.

RECOMMENDED that recommendation 2 of the report be amended as follows:

“authority be delegated to the Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services and the Executive Director of Resources to proceed to spend the Levelling Up Fund allocation up to a total of £2.266m on the required demolition and remediation works at the Windsor Street site and to engage a design and build contractor on the Market Hall site.”

8/2022

COUNCIL PLAN (INCLUDING RECOVERY AND RESTORATION PLAN)
- PRE-SCRUTINY

The Chairman noted that this was an addendum to the existing Council Plan and invited Ms. Poole, as Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy to provide a brief overview of the report.

Ms. Poole presented the background to the Council Plan and reminded Members that this had been put in place prior to the pandemic. A workshop had been held with the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Cabinet Members in 2021 to ensure that the Council's strategic purposes and measures remained relevant in a post pandemic world and to consider whether any new areas of focus were needed following it.

It was highlighted that there was no change to the majority of the Council's priorities and milestones. However, there was a significant change in respect of the Green Thread, which now played a more prominent role and had become a priority in its own right, with its own set of focal points. The addendum should be considered side by side with the Council Plan, which would be reviewed fully in 2023. The Recovery and Restoration Plan had been put in place as a response to the pandemic and the majority of this had now been completed, any remaining areas had been picked up within the Council Plan.

The Leader reiterated that the importance of the Green Thread and how it had been highlighted as a priority and needed to be addressed moving forwards. Members went on to raise a number of areas, which were noted by the Leader and Officers and would be picked up within the Council Plan, this included:

- Strengthening visibility in the district centres – concerns were raised that there had been little or no support from the Centres Manager. The Leader advised that she was new to post and was working hard to make contact with everyone, but she would feedback concerns raised.
- Details around the use of the welcome back funds was provided.
- Reference to the ABCD model was discussed and how some Parish Councils were already doing some of this work and would be willing and able to provide support and further help. (The Leader was happy to discuss this with Members in more detail outside of the meeting, if they wished to contact her.)

- The wording in respect of housing growth on page 18 of the agenda pack, which it was felt did not read particularly well – officers agreed to revisit this.
- The Green Thread and the work already being undertaken within the District and the Council being able to find an area that it could put its own stamp on and make a real difference. It was suggested that the heat pump project could be included within this section.
- Councillor A. Kriss commented that he understood some of the businesses in his area had not been contacted or supported (as referenced in the Economic section on page 16 of the agenda) by any of the programmes mentioned or received the NWEDR newsletter, he was concerned that this was online and not everyone was able to access online services. The Leader provided information around how this could be access and encouraged Councillor Kriss to pass this on to those businesses within his Ward. It was noted that Members could also register for this newsletter and pass on the information to those in their Wards who would find it useful.
- Clarification was also sought in respect of the travel section of page 22 of the agenda pack and the need to promote car sharing and public transport was discussed.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their input to this document and the Executive Director, Finance and Resources acknowledged the valid points that had been made and the need for the Green Thread section to be further developed. The Climate Change Strategy was currently being developed and these discussion points would be fed back to the relevant officers.

9/2022

FUEL POVERTY TASK GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Officers confirmed that the purpose of this report was to formally confirm the membership, terms and reference and timescale for the task group.

The Chairman thanked those Members who had put their names forward to join the task group and Councillor Hunter for chairing it. He was happy with a 6 month timescale for the task group to report back to the Board, and officers advised that the first meeting of the task group was scheduled for 14th June 2022.

RESOLVED that

- (a) The terms of reference of the Fuel Poverty Task Group (as attached to the report) be agreed;
- (b) the membership of the Task Group, as detailed within the report be agreed;
- (c) the Task Group carry out its investigations within six months from the date of the first meeting; and
- (d) the Task Group commence its investigation as soon as possible.

10/2022

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman advised Members that there had been one meeting of the Working Group since the last Board meeting, when it had considered reports in respect of Financial Monitoring for Period 11, the Treasury Management Strategy and an item in respect of introduction of Special Expenses. The Working Group had received a briefing paper in respect of Special Expenses and the Chairman provided Members with a short explanation of this process. The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance confirmed that this was something which would be reviewed in more detail in due course.

11/2022

TASK GROUP UPDATES

The Chairman confirmed that there was current no task groups taking place, but the Fuel Poverty Task Group would commence shortly, as agreed earlier in the meeting.

12/2022

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

Councillor S. Baxter was nominated as the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) for a further year. She also provided an update on the most recent meeting of HOSC that she had attended and explained that in November 2021 a Task and Finish Group had been set up in respect of Ambulance Handover times. A number of recommendations had come from this Group including redirecting those attending A&E when it was not appropriate and discharging of some patients earlier in the day (where appropriate) to improve the flow for A&E patients being admitted. This was something which HOSC considered at each of its meetings, and whilst it was confirmed that improvements were being made, there was limited data being provided.

In her first year as HOSC representative Councillor Baxter commented that the key thing she had learnt was how complex the National Health

Service was and its inter-relationships with other services. She was happy to continue as the representative and would continue to report back to the Board.

RESOLVED that Councillor S. Baxter be appointed as the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2022/23 municipal year.

13/2022

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme for the period 1st June to 30th September 2022 was noted.

14/2022

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

Officers advised that at the Board's next meeting it was due to consider the annual Air Quality Update and the Housing Enforcement Powers item, which had been requested by Councillor Hunter.

The Chairman suggested that an item be added to the work programme in respect of concerns he had around the Leisure Centre, in particular the increased cost of heating the swimming pool and ongoing attendance figures, and the likely impact of these issues on the Council's budget. The Executive Director for Resources confirmed that there was a clear risk, which had been included within the Medium Term Financial Plan, regardless of how Leisure Services were provided. He confirmed that a piece of work was currently being undertaken in respect of the areas highlighted and suggested that it would be appropriate for this matter to be brought before the Board in due course. It was acknowledged that this report may be confidential, and the Chairman suggested that initially it may be more appropriate for the matter to be discussed at the Finance and Budget Working Group. It was agreed that the Officers would liaise with the Chairman in respect of this matter being considered at a future meeting.

Members noted that at the time of publication of the agenda pack the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Board had not been confirmed by Group Leaders and it was suggested that for clarity, this now be included within the minutes of the meeting, as detailed below:

Councillors S. Baxter, A. Beaumont, S. Colella, R. Deeming, C. Hotham, R. Hunter, H. Jones, A. Kriss, P. McDonald, C. Spencer and J. Till.

Officers further confirmed that calendar invites for the Board meetings for the remainder of the municipal year would be sent to Members shortly.

Councillor Baxter asked that an update in respect of the Corporate Performance item discussed earlier, be included within the Work Programme to ensure the areas highlighted were addressed. It was agreed that this would be included within the agenda for the November meeting of the Board.

Councillor Till asked if an item could be scheduled into the work programme in respect of replacement street signs and the process for obtaining these.

RESOLVED that subject to the amendments detailed in the pre-amble above the work programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.01 p.m.

Chairman