

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**22ND JUNE 2022, AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors R. J. Laight (Chairman), A. J. B. Beaumont (Vice-Chairman), R. J. Deeming, G. N. Denaro, S. P. Douglas, A. B. L. English, M. Glass, C.A. Hotham, R. J. Hunter, J. E. King, A. D. Kriss, L. C. R. Mallett (from Minute Item No. 26/22), K.J. May, M. Middleton, S. A. Robinson, H. D. N. Rone-Clarke, M. A. Sherrey, C. J. Spencer, P.L. Thomas, J. Till, K. J. Van Der Plank, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

Observers: Mr C. Cooke

Officers: Mr. K. Dicks, Mrs. S. Hanley, Mr J. Howse, Ms. C. Flanagan and Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill

16\22 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors S. Baxter, S. Colella, S. Hession, R. Jenkins, H. Jones, A. Kent, P. McDonald and M. Thompson.

17\22 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

18\22 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 18TH MAY 2022**

The minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2022 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2022 be approved as a true and correct record.

19\22 **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE**

The Chairman advised that the Chief Executive had participated in a fundraising exercise recently that had been designed to support the Chairman's charity, the Primrose Hospice. The Chief Executive was thanked for participating in this exercise.

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

20\22

**TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER**

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

21\22

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

Mr C. Cooke asked the following question:

“In a recent on-line meeting the question of how to promote community Bromsgrove events and other things (including those run by the Council) came up and the benefit of public notice boards in prominent places such as the High Street. Currently there are a few shops and supermarkets with notice boards but these are subject to maintenance problems and abuse. There is a fabled public notice board in Sanders Park but it is not known whose responsibility it is to maintain that and keep it up to date. I am aware that the Council has a presence on Social Media but that only gets to a relatively small section of the population.

Physical notice boards are always a problem because they need regular updating. I have in mind an electronic notice board because the notices can be easily changed and controlled remotely by a Council employee. It is possible to buy robust stand-alone hardware that would need to be securely attached. It would also have to be positioned carefully in full view of security cameras as it would inevitably attract abuse. Alternatively, you might consider working with a couple of shops to provide electronic notice boards inside their windows. There are elegant systems and the dedicated computer power is very low (one system uses a Raspberry Pi computer not much bigger than a debit card.)

Can the Council provide suitable public-accessible notice boards on the High Street to promote community events?”

The Chairman responded by thanking Mr Cooke for the information and ideas provided. It was clarified that the Council’s Leisure Team had been assessing the option of electronic noticeboards in parks only. The Bromsgrove Centres Manager would work with the Leisure team to assess the potential of also introducing these on the High Street.

22\22

**URGENT DECISIONS**

Members were informed that no urgent decisions had been taken since the previous meeting of Council.

23\22

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22**

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board in the 2021/22 municipal year, Councillor C. Hotham, presented the Board’s Annual Report for Members’ consideration.

Council was informed that the Board had investigated a range of matters during the year, as detailed in the report. In addition, there had been

three Task Group exercises, focusing on Equalities, Flooding and Libraries. Recommendations had been made by each of these groups, which had received a mixed response from Cabinet. Members were asked to note that Task Groups were cross party teams of Councillors investigating subjects in detail over a period of time and their findings needed to be considered carefully when presented for the consideration of Cabinet, which ultimately determined whether recommendations made through the scrutiny process should be agreed.

During consideration of this item, reference was made to the impact of the Flooding Task Group, with Members noting that the group's recommendations had not been endorsed. Instead, there had been a separate review of flooding undertaken by officers at the same time as the Task Group exercise which had recently concluded. Whilst the group's recommendation to employ two extra members of staff had not been agreed by Cabinet due to concerns about the financial costs and the amount of work available for them, Members were advised that external contractors were undertaking work on behalf of Bromsgrove District Council. The Overview and Scrutiny Board would receive an update on the impact of this work in due course and alternative options to working with contractors could be explored further by the Board, including the potential to recommend that new staff be employed in this field in future who could be commissioned to also provide this work to other Councils.

Reference was made to the attendance by Officers at meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board during the year. Whilst Members had been required by law to attend meetings of the Board in person in order to participate in the debate and vote on items, it was noted that Officers had been permitted to participate in meetings remotely. The suggestion was made that it would be helpful for more officers to attend meetings in person in future. However, Members also commented that remote attendance by Officers at meetings had been one of several mitigating measures put in place to help prevent the spread of Covid-19. Whilst nationally Covid-19 mitigation measures were no longer a legal requirement, the illness remained endemic and remote attendance by Officers helped to reduce the risks of transmission.

Members were asked to note that Cabinet recognised the important role of Overview and Scrutiny in the local democratic process. Cabinet always dedicated time to considering the findings of scrutiny Task Groups and, where considered appropriate, endorsed scrutiny recommendations. However, there were also times where Cabinet would conclude that it was not appropriate to agree to some or all of the recommendations that were proposed by a scrutiny Task Group.

Councillor Hotham concluded by thanking other members of the Board for their hard work during the year, particularly the Vice Chairman of the Board Councillor J. Till. Portfolio Holders were thanked for attending Board, Task Group and Working Group meetings to provide evidence to Overview and Scrutiny Members and answer questions. Officers were

also thanked for the support that they had provided to both the Board and to the scrutiny Working Groups and Task Groups. Particular reference was made to the support that had been provided by the Senior Democratic Services Officer and she was thanked for all of her hard work. Members also thanked Councillor Hotham for his hard work as Chairman of the Board.

**RESOLVED** that the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Annual Report 2021/22 be noted.

24\22

**TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER A REPORT FROM THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Community Safety presented a report outlining work during the year that had been undertaken in respect of Community Safety. In presenting the report, Members were reminded that a separate report on the subject of Environmental Services had been presented in January 2022.

Officers were thanked for their hard work continuing to deliver services despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Members were asked to note the important role of CCTV cameras in relation to community safety and that three redeployable CCTV cameras were being used to help tackle crime. The Council's CCTV team worked closely with the police, although use of CCTV camera footage was subject to the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

During consideration of this item, the following specific points were subsequently discussed by Members in detail:

- The CCTV cameras used by the Council that were linked to a central control room and the extent to which any cameras were owned by the authority that were not connected to this central point. Members were advised that the CCTV cameras used by the Environmental Services team based at the depots was maintained on a separate system and not connected to the central control room.
- The multi-agency risk assessments in respect of domestic abuse cases and the extent to which Council Officers worked with police to address these cases. Council was advised that funding was available to help address domestic abuse cases.
- The work that had been undertaken to provide support to young people at risk of becoming victims of crime. The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Community Safety clarified that funding had been made available by the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to help provide support to young people at risk of becoming victims of crime.
- The recent reports of a bicycle having been stolen from School Drive in Bromsgrove which had not been picked up on CCTV due to overhanging trees. Members were informed that the Portfolio

Holder for Environmental Services and Community Safety would raise this with relevant officers for further investigation.

- The number of burglaries that were solved across the District and the proportion of these burglaries that were attended by the police. The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Community Safety agreed to request further information from officers on this subject. However, Members were asked to note that crime statistics of this nature were available on a ward basis on the Police website.
- The work that was being undertaken to address Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in the District.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

25\22

### **SECTION 151 OFFICER APPOINTMENT**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance explained that the Executive Director of Resources, who was also the Council's Section 151 Officer, had resigned and would be leaving the Council's employment soon. There was a legal requirement for the authority to have a Section 151 Officer and it was proposed that the Council's Interim Deputy Section 151 Officer should be appointed to the position of Interim Section 151 Officer for a period of 12 months as a replacement.

There was a new Head of Financial and Customer Services due to commence employment with the Council in June 2022. However, it was not considered to be appropriate to appoint this officer as the Council's Section 151 Officer at this early stage. By contrast, the Interim Deputy Section 151 Officer had gained experience over a number of months working for the authority and would help to ensure service continuity.

During consideration of this item, questions were raised about whether further recruitment would be required to fill the position of Deputy Section 151 Officer, should these proposals be agreed. Members were informed that no further recruitment would be required at this time.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor G. Denaro and seconded by Councillor K. May.

**RESOLVED** to approve the arrangements for an Interim Chief Finance Officer and Section 151 Officer for Bromsgrove District Council for a period of 12 months (with any extension subject to review).

26\22

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET MEETINGS HELD ON 3RD MAY AND 1ST JUNE 2022**

The Chairman explained that recommendations had been made at meetings of Cabinet held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May and 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022 which had been highlighted for Members' consideration at the meeting.

## Treasury Management and Investment Strategy

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance presented the Treasury Management and associated Investment, Capital and Minimum Revenue Provision Strategies. Council was advised that these strategies detailed how the authority would deal with its debt and investments in the following financial year. This included the Council's prudential indicators, which local authorities had been required since 2003 to review, setting out the limits on borrowing and investing within which the Council needed to operate.

There was a statutory requirement for the Council to set these strategies on an annual basis, to report on progress on a half yearly basis and to produce a financial outturn report at the end of the year. All of these reports needed to be considered at a meeting of Council. Should the authority breach any of the prudential indicators, there was a requirement for Council to approve any subsequent changes.

Council was informed that the most significant change for the year ahead was that Councils could not invest for yield and the Section 151 Officer needed to certify for this. Should the Council be found to be investing for yield, the authority would not be able to use debt financing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) ever again. This debt was significantly cheaper than commercial debt and was a cornerstone of Council investment strategy across the country.

Bromsgrove District Council had not taken out new long-term debt for some years. However, new capital works were set out in the authority's Capital Financing Requirement. Even in cases where these works were financed from balances or working capital, there was a requirement for a Minimum Revenue Account (MRA) repayment.

The Capital Strategy provided further information about the Council's plans for borrowing to fund the authority's capital programme as well as the measures that would be taken to finance this work. This included the Burcot Lane and Levelling Up regeneration schemes. Information was included in respect of the Capital Financing Requirement, which was the figure on which Minimum Revenue Provision repayments were based. In addition, Council debt levels were highlighted in the strategy. The Council could not breach authorised limits and could only breach operational boundary limits for short periods of time.

The Treasury Management Strategy detailed the overall economic position. Since the strategy was drafted, there had been changes to the economy due to the impact of the war in Ukraine. Officers were anticipating that this would significantly impact on projected interest rates in the short and medium-term.

Further information was provided about how the Council invested surplus funds. Refinancing indicators had not been changed and were

set at 100 per cent to allow for the greatest level of flexibility due to the nature of the economy.

The Minimum Revenue Position (MRP) Policy had not changed. However, the Council would be engaging with Arlingclose over the summer to review the MRP Policy, debt and investment strategies.

The Council had to notify the Government in advance of the financial year if the authority planned to use capital receipts to fund transformation or redundancy costs. The Council was not planning to use this facility during the year and the Government had in fact reduced its application to just transformation since the start of the 2022/23 financial year.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor G. Denaro and seconded by Councillor K. May.

**RESOLVED** that

- (i) the Capital Strategy as an appropriate overarching strategy for the Council be approved;
- (ii) the Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/23 and the associated MRP policy be approved;
- (iii) the policy for Flexible use of Capital Receipts be approved;
- (iv) the Investment Strategy be approved.

**Council Plan (Including the Restoration and Recovery Plan)**

The Leader presented the Council Plan, including the Restoration and Recovery Plan, for Members' consideration.

Council was informed that Bromsgrove District Council was committed to continuing to deliver services that meet the needs of residents. Since the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council had worked closely with partner organisations to help address the impact of the virus on the local community. The Restoration and Recovery Plan had provided a focus on the actions that were being taken by the Council in response to the pandemic. The majority of these actions had been completed or remained ongoing.

The Council had an approved Council Plan which had been in place prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The addendum to the report detailed some small changes to the plan in light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council had retained strategic purposes underpinned by priorities, although the green thread had become a standalone priority for the Council.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the content of the Council Plan in detail. Questions were raised about the reasons why the addendum applied for a period of 12 months. Council was informed that this was because Members' terms of office were due to come to an end in May 2023 and after this date the new administration would want to develop a Council Plan that reflected their priorities. The potential for Members to be consulted on the content of the next Council Plan was also raised. The Leader clarified that Members would have an opportunity to contribute their thoughts after the local elections had taken place in May 2023.

During consideration of this item, concerns were raised about the costs, in terms of officer time, of developing an addendum to the Council Plan that would only apply for a relatively short period of time. The suggestion was made that, in order to ensure the sustainability of Council services, there should be longer-term planning taking place. The Leader explained that, following the pandemic, this was the appropriate time to review the content of the Council Plan and to review the needs of the community in light of the impact of Covid-19. The addendum would help to support service sustainability whilst enabling the Council to work differently as the country learned to live with Covid.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor K. May and seconded by Councillor G. Denaro.

**RESOLVED** that

- 1) the Council Plan Addendum 2022/23 be approved and included alongside the current BDC Council Plan 2019/23; and
- 2) the Recovery and Restoration Plan 2020/21 be agreed and closed.

27\22

**AUDIT, STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22**

The Chairman of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee in the 2021/22 municipal year, Councillor L. Mallett, presented the Committee's Annual Report for Members' consideration.

Council was advised that the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee had a very important role. The Committee ensured the independence of controls on corporate governance and that appropriate mechanisms were in place at the Council to manage the authority's finances and monitor risk mitigation. There had been challenges during the year, mainly due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic had also impacted on the audit function at the Council.

Councillor Mallett thanked the other members of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee for their hard work during the year. Representatives of the external auditors, Grant Thornton, the Internal



Audit team, Democratic Services and the Financial Services team were also thanked for their hard work and support.

During consideration of this item, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance thanked the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee for their work in 2021/22. Members were advised that the work of the Committee was vital and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance highlighted his plans to improve the presentation of figures to the Committee in the 2022/23 municipal year.

**RESOLVED** that the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee's Annual Report for 2021/22 be noted.

28\22

**TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 3RD MAY AND 1ST JUNE 2022**

The minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May and Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022 were noted.

29\22

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

The Chairman explained that 8 Questions on Notice had been received for consideration at the meeting and would be considered in the order in which they had been submitted. A maximum of 15 minutes was allocated to consideration of these questions and the answers provided and there were no supplementary questions.

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

"It now seems probable that this council will end the financial year 2021/2022 with a surplus of around £370k. So is it now time to revisit the Independent groups budget suggestion of spending £70,000 on the reintroduction of the hugely popular and useful community grants fund which supported many local good and worthy causes?"

The Leader responded by commenting that the forecast outturn position for 2021/22 was better than anticipated at the time of setting the 2022/23 budget. This would mean that the opening balance of the Council's General Fund would be healthier than anticipated, which would help the Council's challenging financial position.

The Leader stressed, however, that other areas within the budget were likely to perform worse than anticipated in the 2022/23 financial year. For example, the inflationary assumptions made when setting the budget with regard to pay inflation (of 2 per cent) and non-pay inflation (of circa 5 per cent) were likely to come under significant pressure during the period. These pressures would be closely monitored but were likely to lead to significant overspends in some areas.

Members were also asked to note that the Council still had an underlying gap between spend and income over the medium term. As previously

reported in the Budget, the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan forecasted the authority's General Fund position to decline significantly from a balance of over £4 million to £1.046 million at the end of 2024/25, a level which was below minimum adequate levels.

The Council would therefore need to continue to take steps to reduce expenditure and/or increase income to remain financially secure moving forward. This financial reality made any decision to spend additional monies very difficult as the Council continued to aim to balance the budget.

**Question submitted by Councillor S. Douglas**

"It is disappointing news that WCC have been unsuccessful in their bid for £84m to invest in bus service. I recall that the expected success of this bid was the reasoning behind the refusal to move forward with the Independent budget proposal to fund a business case to investigate the feasibility of BDC running its own local bus services to connect the outlying centres with Bromsgrove. Will the controlling group now consider writing to the County Council to request that they review the services in Bromsgrove with the potential to provide free bus travel at the weekends?"

The Leader responded by advising that she shared Councillor Douglas's disappointment that Worcestershire County Council had been unsuccessful in their bid for major funding to invest in bus services. Whilst the Council wanted to support all residents with access, connectivity and public transport opportunities throughout the District, it was not possible to commit resources to a feasibility and business case study to consider the Council, as a District authority, running local bus services, particularly given the financial pressures and challenges.

The Council's priorities and commitments were clearly set out in the Council Plan, which was being considered at the Council meeting and which were detailed to:

- Participate in work with Worcestershire County Council and other partners to enable new, better, integrated and more sustainable modes of transport across the District; and
- Support Active travel.

Finally, Members were asked to note that Bromsgrove District Council already supported Community Transport in Bromsgrove (BURT) at a cost of £28,000 each year, which enabled approximately 350/400 journeys a month to be provided for registered users.

**Question submitted by Councillor C. Hotham**

"Please could the cabinet member for finance give a figure for the net annual running cost of the Parkside building to this council after all income and expenditure is accounted for?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance explained that the net annual running cost budget for Parkside was circa £240,000. The main costs were business rates, utilities and facilities management. The Council worked hard to try to reduce these costs by letting out space to external organisations and this work would continue.

**Question submitted by Councillor S. Baxter**

Councillor C. Hotham asked the following question on behalf of Councillor Baxter:

“On 13 April the Government announced the allocation of £2.8m to Bromsgrove District Council through the UK prosperity fund. This is a great opportunity for levelling up across the whole district and is dependent on an investment plan to be submitted by the Council by 1 August. The guidance, announced at the same time stated that ‘Local partners should support lead local authorities for each place to develop the investment plan’.

Please can the leader advise on who the Council considers are its partners and which local partners have been involved to date in the development of the investment plan?

Parish Councils in Bromsgrove we’re first notified of the fund nearly 2 months later, on 8 June when they were informed that, as stakeholders they ‘are being invited to submit proposals for projects that address a need or exploit an opportunity in the local area’.

The deadline for proposals is 20 June. Does the leader believe that it is realistic for any organisation to conceive, develop and sign off any project within 7 working days.”

The Leader responded by highlighting that the Council had engaged with a wide range of partners to develop the investment plan, including Worcestershire County Council, Parish Councils, neighbouring Councils, the Chamber of Commerce, Local Enterprise Partnerships, housing providers, training providers, the Police, NHS, Department of Work and Pensions and representatives of the voluntary and community sector (VCS). The call for projects was an important part of this engagement as it helped to identify challenges and opportunities that were unlikely to be picked up in conventional data and statistics.

The Government had set a very challenging timetable for submission of the Investment Plan. Whilst the prospectus was published on 13th April 2022, additional guidance had been issued in the intervening period and the Council had had to make a number of adjustments to the authority’s approach before meaningful engagement could be undertaken with partners. It was important to note that the call for projects was about identifying need and opportunity. The Council was not required to submit specific projects as part of the Investment Plan. Consequently, organisations might have an opportunity to access funding for projects

after the investment plan had been agreed. This was particularly likely for activities within the Communities and Place priority of the scheme.

**Question submitted by Councillor R. Hunter**

“Right to Buy

The Prime Minister’s recent speech in Blackpool reignited fears over the possible expansion of the Right to Buy to housing association tenants. Whilst genuine efforts to support people to own their own home are to be lauded, the unfortunate consequence of Right to Buy is the loss of badly needed social housing that in reality will never be replaced. How many homes has BDHT sold through the Preserved Right to Buy and Right to Acquire since it was established and how will you protect Bromsgrove’s social housing from any further attempts to sell it off?”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health and Well Being responded by agreeing that there remained significant demand for social housing in Bromsgrove and anything which removed the availability of much needed social housing and homes, would be of detriment to local communities and future tenants.

At the request of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health and Well Being, officers had spoken with colleagues at Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) to seek their views, and provide the data, given the question related to the numbers sold by the organisation, as a Registered Provider. Since 2016, there had been 38 properties sold via the Preserved Right to Buy and there had been 5 properties sold via the Right to Acquire (by BDHT), so 43 properties under both categories had been sold in total since 2016.

With regard to any possible expansion of the ‘Right to Buy’ scheme to housing association tenants, which if proposals were to be enacted, would impact on BDHT’s stock, their overriding view continued to be that the most pressing concern was the number of social rent properties that were available, and taking any stock out of ‘the system’ would add more pressure to the waiting list and homelessness situation. Generally, Right to Buy encouraged the larger family homes to be sold and these properties were what Bromsgrove needed the most.

The Council would continue to work closely in partnership with BDHT primarily, but also with other partners and providers, to ensure that the authority supported and maximised the availability of all types of housing and accommodation to meet the District’s housing needs.

**Question submitted by Councillor J. King**

“Artrix assets

As we get closer to the reopening of our local arts centre, The Artrix, what assurances can you give that assets such as fittings and technical

equipment that were removed when the building became a vaccination centre will be fully reinstalled or replaced?"

The Leader responded by commenting that she would write to the Artrix Holding Trust on Councillor King's behalf on this occasion regarding this matter. However, Members were asked to note that all future questions about the Artrix needed to be addressed to the Artrix Holding Trust directly.

**Question submitted by Councillor S. Robinson**

"Sports facilities

Following the loss of the sports hall and the failure to deliver a viable alternative at North Bromsgrove High School, what are you doing to improve the availability of sports facilities in Bromsgrove?"

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance responded by explaining that the Council had an agreed position for operating the sports facilities including the sports hall at North Bromsgrove High School outside of school hours.

The contractual mechanics were being worked through and although the new operating model was not yet in place, the facility, North Bromsgrove High School's sports hall, had continued to be hired by BAM for community use.

The Council's Leisure Strategy would be published in the Autumn and would include a build facilities strategy that had received input from Sport England, Governing Bodies, Clubs, Schools and the public. This would help to ensure the Council was able to support the availability of sports facilities in the District to match the current and future demand in line with recent activity trends.

**Question submitted by Councillor R. Jenkins**

In Councillor Jenkins's absence, Members referred to the question as printed in the agenda.

"For the safety of pedestrians and to protect shop and market stall frontages this Council urgently should make a case to WCC to update the ruling made in 1987 which allows delivery vehicles on the High Street until 10.30am. This was long before the changes were made to Bromsgrove's chartered market. This should now be for before 09.00am which is the time by which all market stall vehicles have to be off the High Street so the market can commence.

All of the High Street properties except one, no. 110, have rear functional doors. This change would prevent accidents occurring, any additional damage to property happening, and serve the convenience of pedestrians. This even on non-market days when the High Street can be

surprisingly busy at that time. The time off the High Street for delivery vehicles should remain at the existing 4.00am timing.

Please could the Leader provide an update on the progress that is being made to address this matter?"

In response, the Leader advised that the Bromsgrove Centres Manager was investigating the matter and had liaised with internal Council officers regarding evidence to support any changes to the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). An initial meeting had been held with Worcestershire County Council to establish the TRO process. Background work would be undertaken and Members would be updated accordingly.

30\22

### **MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

The Chairman advised that 2 Motions on Notice had been received for consideration at the meeting.

#### **Levelling Up Funding in Bromsgrove**

Council considered the following Motion on Notice that was submitted by Councillor S. Robinson:

"Keep Bromsgrove's levelling up funding in Bromsgrove

Council calls on the Leader of Bromsgrove District Council to lobby Worcestershire County Council to reinvest the proceeds from the sale of the Bromsgrove Library site into improvements for Bromsgrove High Street."

The Motion was proposed by Councillor S. Robinson and seconded by Councillor R. Hunter.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Robinson commented that she welcomed the funding that had been received from the Government for High Street improvement works as well as the work that had already been undertaken by Bromsgrove District Council and Worcestershire County Council in respect of High Street improvements. The purpose of the Motion was to ensure that funding that had been received by Worcestershire County Council for the sale of the former library site, was reinvested in Bromsgrove town centre. The High Street was a significant hub in Bromsgrove town centre, where businesses were based and events took place. There was a need to ensure that the appearance of the High Street was presented well. Councillor Robinson expressed the view that unfortunately there were some issues with the appearance of the High Street, for example, the tarmac on the road was in a poor condition, following work by utilities companies and, although work was being undertaken to address this situation, more could be done to improve the urban environment.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Hunter commented that the Motion did not propose that the money from the sale of the former library site should be taken from Worcestershire County Council. Instead, the Motion was calling for Bromsgrove District Council to ask Worcestershire County Council to invest the income from the sale in Bromsgrove town centre. Councillor Hunter expressed the view that the urban environment, including street furniture, was in need of improvement and that there needed to be an increase in investment in the town centre. Concerns were also raised about the condition of bus shelters situated in the town centre and the need for these to be improved.

During consideration of this item, an amendment was proposed to the Motion. This amendment was proposed by Councillor L. Mallet and seconded by Councillor H. Rone-Clarke.

The wording of the amended Motion was proposed as detailed below:

“Keep Bromsgrove’s levelling up funding in Bromsgrove

Council calls on the Leader of Bromsgrove District Council to lobby Worcestershire County Council to reinvest the proceeds from the sale of the Bromsgrove Library site into improvements for Bromsgrove High Street *and the Leader and relevant Portfolio Holder should come to the next Council meeting to speak on the schemes that are planned for the High Street.*”

In proposing the amendment, Councillor Mallett commented that in previous years funding had been allocated to works, although he expressed the view that this had not always achieved best value for money. There were opportunities available to use the funding from the sale of the former library site to invest in the town. To ensure transparency, it would be helpful for Council to be informed about the schemes that did receive investment from this funding. Lessons needed to be learned from previous regeneration works in Bromsgrove town centre to ensure that the condition of the urban environment and street furniture remained fit for purpose after this investment had occurred.

In seconding the amendment, Councillor Rone-Clarke noted that he represented a ward located in Bromsgrove. Members were advised that he was frequently contacted by local residents about the condition of the High Street and it was important to ensure that action was taken to address this and that that action was promoted and held to account. Councillor Rone-Clarke also commented on the potential for a broader package of support to be provided in the future, including the possibility of providing rate relief to small businesses.

Councillor Robinson, as the proposer of the original Motion on Notice, confirmed that she was happy to accept this amendment to the wording of the Motion.

In response to the Motion, the Leader agreed that it was important for Worcestershire County Council to invest in Bromsgrove High Street, town centre and District as a whole. However, the Leader commented that the proposal detailed in the Motion would be difficult to achieve. Money received from the land transactions would, in accordance with due process, need to be received by Worcestershire County Council. How this funding was subsequently spent would be determined by Worcestershire County Council. The receipt from the former library site was part of a bigger picture in terms of opportunities for the County Council to invest in the District. As part of this process, £14.5 million Levelling Up funding had already been secured for investment in the regeneration of Bromsgrove town centre.

Members were asked to note that 90 per cent of small business on the High Street in Bromsgrove were already in receipt of business rates relief. The new Town Centres Manager had been undertaking work in Bromsgrove town centre to try to improve the urban environment, including through investment in lighting. Members were also asked to note that any utilities company that undertook works that impacted on urban design had up to 6 months to address this through remediation works.

Bromsgrove District Council had already received alternative funding, which would be used to help with the regeneration of Bromsgrove town centre, including Levelling Up funding. There was also £2.6 million of funding that had been allocated to Bromsgrove in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Reference was made during the debate to the condition of the bus shelters situated in the town centre. Members were asked to notify the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and Community Safety of any specific bus shelters that were in a poor condition. Council was also asked to note that there was already a programme in place for maintenance of bus shelters.

On being put to the vote the Motion was lost.

### **An Annual Summer Celebration**

Council considered the following Motion on Notice that was submitted by Councillor J. King:

“An annual summer celebration

Council expresses its gratitude to everyone who contributed to the celebrations of HM The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee in communities right across the district. Council extends a particular thank you to the Bromsgrove branch of the Royal British Legion and all the organisations involved in the excellent town centre event on the Sunday of the Jubilee Weekend. Such events bring communities together and promote local businesses, providing considerable social and economic benefits.



Council calls on officers to explore the potential for creating an annual outdoor town centre event of this scale to complement the fantastic programme of activity put on as part of the Bromsgrove Festival, thereby ensuring the benefits continue to be realised year after year.”

The Motion was proposed by Councillor King and seconded by Councillor Hunter.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor King thanked all the residents, businesses and VCS organisations, particularly the Royal British Legion, for their hard work organising the recent Platinum Jubilee celebrations. There had been a number of events in the District which had brought the community together. The Bromsgrove Festival provided a useful opportunity to celebrate Bromsgrove but more could be done to build on this event. An annual event would help to attract more visitors to the District and would have a positive impact on community spirit. The Council could also work closely with partner organisations to deliver an annual event celebrating Bromsgrove.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Hunter commented that the action proposed in the Motion would support ongoing work in respect of the preparation of the Council’s new Leisure Strategy. The Motion requested that the Council should explore having an annual celebration, which would not necessarily commit the authority to taking this action.

During consideration of this Motion, an amendment was proposed to the Motion. The wording of this amended Motion was as follows:

“An annual summer celebration

Council expresses its gratitude to everyone who contributed to the celebrations of HM The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee in communities right across the district. Council extends a particular thank you to the Bromsgrove branch of the Royal British Legion and all the organisations involved in the excellent town centre event on the Sunday of the Jubilee Weekend. Such events bring communities together and promote local businesses, providing considerable social and economic benefits. Council calls on officers to explore the potential for creating an annual outdoor town centre event, *within our town and outside town centres*, of this scale to complement the fantastic programme of activity put on as part of the Bromsgrove Festival, thereby ensuring the benefits continue to be realised year after year.”

The amendment was proposed by Councillor Rone-Clarke and seconded by Councillor Mallett.

In introducing the amendment, Councillor Rone-Clarke commented that, whilst there would not be a jubilee every year, an annual event celebrating Bromsgrove could take place. This would provide an opportunity to attract visitors to Bromsgrove High Street and for people to access services provided by local restaurants and craftspeople. As

part of this process, it would be helpful to ensure that residents living in parts of the District located outside the town of Bromsgrove could be included in the festivities.

Councillor King, as the proposer of the original Motion on Notice, confirmed that she was happy to accept this amendment to the wording of the Motion.

Members discussed the Motion in detail and commented on the need for residents living in areas of the District outside Bromsgrove town centre, particularly in rural locations, to be provided with access to events in the town. Reference was made to the jubilee festivities and the benefits arising from these recent celebrations, including in the ways in which this had brought people together from different generations.

In responding to the Motion, the Leader thanked Councillor King and other Members for their comments of appreciation about all that had been done to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The Leader agreed that the Council should extend a particular thank you to the Bromsgrove Branch of the Royal British Legion and all other organisations involved in making the Jubilee celebrations a success.

Members were asked to note that the Leisure Strategy was in the process of being prepared and this would explore how events could be organised and managed across the District. In this context, it was considered inappropriate to pre-empt the outcomes of the work on this strategy, although it was likely that the strategy would bring forward proposals regarding events in the District. In the meantime, the Leader agreed that events were a great way of bringing communities together and this could be by inviting communities to organise events as well as by attendance only. Bromsgrove District was large, and it was worthwhile having events, be they large or small, in a range of venues so that the various and quality landscapes and historic buildings could be enjoyed by as many people as possible.

Reference was made to the progress that had been made with the development of the Leisure Strategy. Members were advised that the strategy was due to be presented for the Cabinet's consideration in autumn 2022. Prior to this date, Members would be consulted about the appropriate content.

On being put to the vote the Motion was lost.

The meeting closed at 8.05 p.m.

Chairman