

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD

Tuesday, 2nd January 2007 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Miss D. H. Campbell J.P. (Chairman), C. J. K. Wilson (Vice-Chairman), J. T. Duddy, W. R. Newnes, S. R. Peters, N. Psirides J.P., J. A. Ruck, S. P. Shannon and C. J. Tidmarsh.

Officers: Mr. P. Street, Mrs. C. Felton, Mr. J. Wright, Miss. D. McCarthy.

Observer: Councillor G. N. Denaro

81/06 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs. J. M. Boswell, A. J. Dent, Mrs. R. L. Dent and Mrs. A. E. Doyle

82/06 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

No declarations of interest or whipping arrangements were made.

83/06 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 5th December 2006 were submitted.

It was suggested that in future those officers who attend meetings of this Board should be included in the minutes. However, there was some concern about this suggestion.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the Minutes be approved and confirmed as a correct record; and
- (ii) that, subject to discussions with the Chief Executive, the attendance of officers at future meetings be recorded and included in the minutes.

84/06 **CLOSURE OF RURAL POST OFFICES**

A report relating to the closure of rural post offices was considered and a discussion ensued. Members were still of the opinion that further background information would be useful and it was questioned whether or not Postwatch Midlands should be contacted again requesting information such as the official classification of a rural post office, the number of rural post offices within Bromsgrove District, viability issues facing rural post offices and the process that could be followed when closing rural post offices. It was felt this information would enable members to better respond to any potential closures that may be announced in the near future.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Director (Services) be requested to contact Postwatch Midlands requesting general information and any facts and figures which members might find useful, such as, the official classification of a rural post office, the number of rural post offices within Bromsgrove District, viability issues facing rural post offices and the process that might be followed for the closure of rural post offices.

85/06

BDHT SCRUTINY REPORT – EXECUTIVE CABINET DECISION

It was reported to members that the BDHT scrutiny report had been considered at the Executive Cabinet meeting held on 6th December 2006 where members had acknowledged the good work of the Task Group.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

86/06

PROGRESS ON CURRENT TASK GROUPS

Car Parking Task Group

Councillor Denaro, Chairman of the Car Parking Task Group, reported that due to the issues surrounding car parking being more complex than originally anticipated and in particular, complications in relation to financial implications, the Task Group had not been able to finalise its report. It was requested that the Task Group be allowed more time to continue the scrutiny exercise and submit the final report to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board. It was hoped that following the next Task Group meeting on the 11th January 2007, members might be able to finalise their scrutiny report and it could, therefore, be ready for the Board meeting scheduled to be held on 6th February 2007.

A discussion ensued relating to the work of the task group and the Chairman of the Task Group agreed to take all comments on board.

Flytipping Task Group

Members were informed that the Task Group's final report was expected to be finalised at its meeting on 10th January 2007 and would be submitted to the next Scrutiny Steering Board meeting in February 2007 as agreed.

It was questioned whether the Task Group's report should be delayed due to the suggestion that the reduction of the green waste collection and the trial operational changes relating to the household waste site in Romsley this year could have an impact on the number of flytipping incidents. However, it was believed that Task Group reports should not be delayed wherever possible and that the comments made would be taken into account at the Task Group's review meeting.

Members also raised concerns over the poor publicity over the change in the green waste collection and Christmas waste collection and it was suggested that a sticker could be placed on wheelie bins informing the public of any imminent changes. The Corporate Director (Services) noted this suggestion and reassured members that in future the Council would improve the publicity of such changes in service.

Watercourses Task Group

A brief update on the progress of the Watercourses Task Group was given to the Board. It was stated that the Watercourses Task Group was due to submit its final report to the Scrutiny Steering Board at the meeting scheduled to be held in March 2007.

A specific issue was discussed relating to a particular watercourse in the District which was close to three recently built properties. It was stated that the ward member was following up this issue with the Head of Planning and Environment Services.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the verbal updates given by members of the Car Parking, Flytipping and Watercourses Task Groups be noted; and
- (ii) that the Car Parking Task Group be granted an extension to allow members of the Task Group to finalise their report and submit it to the meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board scheduled to be held on 6th March 2007 or the meeting scheduled to be held on 6th February 2007, if possible.

87/06

WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the work of the Scrutiny Steering Board.

RESOLVED that the following Work Programme be approved -

Subject	Date of Consideration	Other Information
Health Scrutiny Update	Quarterly (March/June/Sept/Dec)	Councillor D. McGrath, as this Council's representative on Worcestershire County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to provide an update report.
Flytipping – Task Group	6th February 2007	Final Task Group Report due February 2007 – Task Group set up September 2006. First Meeting: 12th October 2006.
Car Parking – Task Group	6th February 2007 / 6th March 2007	Final Task Group Report postponed. Due February/March 2007 depending on outcome of Task Group Meeting on 11th January 2007 – Task Group set up September 2006. First Meeting: 3rd October 2006.
Watercourses – Task Group	6th March 2007	Final Task Group Report due March 2007 – Task Group set up October 2006. First Meeting: 15th November 2006

Worcestershire County Council's Highways Maintenance Scrutiny Task Group	6th March 2007 / 3rd April 2007	Chairman of the County's Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be invited to attend a meeting to provide information to the Board on the work carried out by the Highways Maintenance Scrutiny Task Group once completed.
High Hedges Legislation	3rd April 2007	Report relating to the cost incurred by other local authorities. The service at BDC to be reviewed in April 2007.
Culture and Community Services – Task Group Review	June 2007	Task Group to reconvene for a review meeting June 2007.
Use of Consultants – Task Group Review	July 2007	Task Group to reconvene for a review meeting July 2007.
BDHT – Task Group Review	December 2007	Task Group to reconvene for a review meeting December 2007.

88/06

ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED BY EXECUTIVE CABINET

Consideration was given to the items on the agenda for the Executive Cabinet meeting which was scheduled to be held on 3rd January 2007.

A general discussion ensued relating to the Medium Term Financial Plan and specifically the future of the Museum as well as Haybridge and Woodrush Sports Centres. Funding for implementing scrutiny recommendations was also discussed.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that with regard to item 8, Medium Term Financial Plan, and specifically relating to Haybridge and Woodrush Sports Centres, the Executive Cabinet be requested to inform members of the public on the future of both leisure facilities as soon as a decision had been taken;
- (ii) that the Leader of the Council be invited to attend the next meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board on 6th February 2007 to discuss the position of scrutiny in relation to the Executive Cabinet and, in particular, how the recommendations arising from scrutiny reviews, when accepted by the Executive Cabinet, could fit in to the Medium Term Financial Plan in order that the recommendations were adequately funded to ensure that they made a difference to the residents of Bromsgrove and to ensure that scrutiny remained an effective tool for the Council; and
- (iii) that the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Community Services be invited to attend the next meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board on 6th February 2007 to explain whether the Cabinet had taken in to account the recommendations of the Museum Task Group when discussing the future of the Museum and why the Cabinet had not directly communicated to the Board its proposal to close the Museum.

The Meeting closed at 7.30 p.m.

Chairman