

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

6TH JUNE 2023, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors A. Bailes, R. Bailes, A. M. Dale, E. M. S. Gray, R. J. Hunter, P. M. McDonald, S. T. Nock, S. A. Robinson, H. D. N. Rone-Clarke and D. J. A. Forsythe (Substitute)

Observers:

Councillor C. A. Hotham – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling

Councillor S. A. Webb – Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing and Strategic Housing

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, Mr. P. Carpenter and Mr. M. Sliwinski.

1/23

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

A nomination for the position of Chairman was received in respect of Councillor P. M. McDonald.

RESOLVED that Councillor P. M. McDonald be appointed as Chairman of the Board for the ensuing municipal year.

2/23

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

A nomination for the position of Vice Chairman was received in respect of Councillor S. T. Nock.

RESOLVED that Councillor S. T. Nock be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Board for the ensuing municipal year.

3/23

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. D. Stanley and B. Kumar. Councillor D. J. A. Forsythe attended the meeting as named substitute for Councillor B. Kumar.

4/23

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

There were no declarations of interest nor of whipping arrangements.

5/23

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling, in his capacity as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board in 2022-23, was invited to present the Board's Annual Report for that municipal year. The Annual Report detailed and summarised the work undertaken by the Board in 2022-23, including the recommendations made by the Board to Cabinet throughout the year.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling stated that the 2022-23 municipal year saw a greater proportion of Overview and Scrutiny Board recommendations being accepted by Cabinet than in the previous few years. It was highlighted that scrutiny had an important role in reviewing the progress of the Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund projects taking place in Bromsgrove District.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling highlighted that in 2022-23 the Overview and Scrutiny Board had concluded one task group review on fuel poverty. The final report of the Fuel Poverty Task Group contained six recommendations which were agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and accepted in full by Cabinet. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling took the opportunity to thank Councillor R. J. Hunter, the Chairman of the Fuel Poverty Task Group, and Councillor S. A. Webb, who was integral in supporting the task group review in her capacity of a Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

Following the presentation, Councillor R. J. Hunter paid tribute to Councillor C. A. Hotham for his chairmanship of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board over the past few years. He highlighted that the work of the Board had contributed to many positive developments for the residents of Bromsgrove and the Council such as the increase in council tax on empty homes and the broadening of the council tax support scheme.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Annual Report 2022-23 be noted.

6/23

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - RECOMMENDATION TRACKER FOR 2022-23

The Overview and Scrutiny Board Recommendations Tracker for 2022-23 was presented for Members' consideration and it was noted that the purpose of the tracker was to record the recommendations that the Board made to Cabinet and to track the status of these recommendations. For recommendations that were accepted by the Cabinet, the tracker provided updated information on the progress in implementing of those recommendations.

It was noted that the recommendations tracker would continue to be in place for 2023-24 municipal year.

RESOLVED that Overview and Scrutiny Board - Recommendation Tracker for 2022-23 be noted.

NOTICE OF MOTION - REQUEST TO INVESTIGATE

The Chairman introduced this item and reported that this concerned the Motion agreed unanimously at the Annual Council meeting of 24th May 2023 for “the Overview and Scrutiny Board to prepare a report regarding the transition of the Council from a Cabinet System to that of a Committee System. The report to be presented to an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council to be held in September.”

It was proposed that in the first instance an invitation be made to the Local Government Association (LGA) to deliver a presentation on the governance system options at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting on 10th July 2023. Subsequent to this, it was planned for a review group (a sub-committee of the Board) to be convened to consider the issue and prepare a report on the Council’s governance system options including whether it was appropriate for the Council to transition to a Committee System.

The Chairman proposed that this review should be undertaken as a Short Sharp Review with meetings to take place on 10th August 2023 and several further dates in late August and early September. It was proposed that membership of the Short Sharp Review Group should be restricted to five Members who would be available to attend all meetings of the Review Group. It was further noted that the terms of reference of the Review Group would be finalised following the presentation to be delivered on 10th July 2023.

Members debated these proposals and in doing so agreed that the Short Sharp Review Group should be launched, comprising five Members in total with all political groups having representation. It was agreed that as the proposer of the Motion at the Annual Council meeting, Councillor P. M. McDonald be selected as the Chairman of the Review Group. It was further agreed that the Group Leaders of all political groups be invited to nominate one Member each to the four remaining positions on the Review Group.

RESOLVED that

- 1) A Short Sharp Review Group be established to investigate the transition of the Council from a Cabinet System to a Committee System with the view for the Review Group to prepare its final report by September 2023;
- 2) The Short Sharp Review Group be composed of five Members with Councillor P. M. McDonald to be appointed as Chairman of the Short Sharp Review Group;
- 3) The remaining four positions be distributed equally amongst the political groups currently represented on the Council, with Group Leaders of all political groups invited to nominate one Member

each to the four remaining positions on the Short Sharp Review Group.

8/23

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Members were advised that the chairman and other members of the Finance and Budget Working Group needed to be appointed. It was noted that the Chairman of the Group had traditionally been the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board. Members agreed that this arrangement should continue for 2023-24. It was noted that in addition five additional members of the Board plus the Chairman of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee would be represented on the Finance and Budget Working Group as per the Terms of Reference. The five additional Members of the Board confirmed that they would be interested in serving on the Working Group in 2023-24.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Councillor P. M. McDonald be appointed Chairman of the Finance and Budget Working Group for the ensuing municipal year;
- 2) As per the Working Group's Terms of Reference, Councillor D. J. Nicholl be appointed to serve on the Finance and Budget Working Group in his capacity as the Chairman of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee;
- 3) Councillors S. T. Nock, R. J. Hunter, H. D. N. Rone-Clarke, A. Bailes, and S. A. Robinson be appointed to serve on the Finance and Budget Working Group for the ensuing municipal year;
- 4) The Terms of Reference for the Finance and Budget Working Group be approved.

9/23

TASK GROUP UPDATES

There were no ongoing task groups to report on before the Board.

10/23

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

It was reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Board had not yet been delegated the authority to appoint a Member to serve on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC). Therefore, nominations for this outside body appointment were to be considered once the authority to appoint had been granted to the Board.

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

11/23

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was presented for Members' consideration and it was requested that the following items be added for pre-scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Board:

- Grass Verge Maintenance
- Parking Enforcement Service Level Agreement
- Playing Pitch Strategy
- Draft Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25.

RESOLVED that, subject to the pre-amble above, the Cabinet Work Programme be noted.

12/23

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

Members discussed the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. During the discussion it was noted that a scrutiny investigation request had been received from a member of the public regarding council policy on parking for blue badge holders. Members agreed that an initial presentation on this topic could be delivered by Officers at the next Board meeting.

With regards to the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme, some Members argued that the Governance System Short Sharp Review should be prioritised at this point and the number of items on the Board's Work Programme kept to a minimum before the conclusion of this Short Sharp Review. Councillor Hunter responded that all matters raised by Members should be added to the Work Programme as many of these were issues that Members encountered when speaking with residents.

Following the debate, it was agreed to add to the Work Programme the pre-scrutiny items selected from the Cabinet Work Programme as noted under the previous agenda item and the overview item on parking policy with regards to blue badge holders to the next meeting's agenda. It was agreed that other items would not be added at this point to allow capacity for undertaking the Governance System Short Sharp Review.

RESOLVED that subject to the preamble above the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme be noted.

13/23

TO CONSIDER, AND IF CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE, TO PASS THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING DURING THE CONSIDERATION OF ITEM(S) OF BUSINESS CONTAINING EXEMPT INFORMATION:-

RESOLVED: that under Section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it/they involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of scheme 12A to the Act, as amended, the relevant paragraph of

that part, in each case, being as set out below and that it is in the public interest to do so:-

Item No	Paragraph
14	3

14/23

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 13TH MARCH 2023 AND 29TH MARCH 2023

The minutes of the meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Board that took place on 13th March and 29th March 2023 were considered including the exempt minutes record of the meeting of 13th March 2023 (Minute Item No. 91/22 –Former Market Hall Site Proposal – pre-scrutiny and Minute Item No. 92/22 – To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 17th January 2023).

Councillor R. Hunter advised of an omission in the minutes of 13th March 2023 with respect of the action for officers to prepare a follow-up report on damp and mould issues outlining the steps that the Council had taken with regards to enforcement of this issue in the private rented sector. The Democratic Services Officer undertook to correct this omission and follow-up on this action from the meeting.

RESOLVED that subject to the correction listed in the preamble above the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings held on Monday 13th March 2023 and Wednesday 29th March 2023 be approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(During the consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed which related to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

The meeting closed at 7.04 p.m.

Chairman