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Cabinet  
24th July 2024

## **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **MEETING OF THE CABINET**

**24TH JULY 2024, AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), S. J. Baxter (Deputy Leader), S. R. Colella, B. McEldowney, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

Observers: Councillor E. M. S. Gray, Councillor P. M. McDonald and Councillor S.T. Nock

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, Mrs. D Goodall, Ms J. Willis and Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill

14/24

### **FOODBANK AND COMMUNITY SHOP PROVISION TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT**

The Chairman of the Foodbank and Community Shop Provision Task Group, Councillor E. Gray, presented the group's final report for the Cabinet's consideration.

Members were advised that the Task Group had commenced their review in December 2023. During the course of the review, the Task Group had considered the findings of the previous Fuel Poverty Task Group, had interviewed relevant Council Officers and had undertaken visits to food banks in the District.

Cabinet was advised that there had been a delay since the Task Group's report had been presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in April 2024. The delay had arisen partly due to the transfer from one municipal year to another but also due to changes to meeting dates that had occurred in the build up to the general election. As a consequence of this delay, Members were asked to note that there had been some changes locally in respect of food bank and community shop provision, including the closure of a food bank in Sidemoor ward.

Based on the evidence gathered during the review, the Task Group had proposed five recommendations, which had been endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

The intention of the first recommendation was primarily to enhance communications in relation to food banks. This would help to more easily signpost residents to the food banks and community shops in the District that were available to use.

The second recommendation focused on the support that the Council could provide to food banks and community groups. It was recognised that Officers already undertook a lot of work in this space and the Bromsgrove Partnership also had an important role in relation to this matter. However, Councillor Gray commented that newer groups did not necessarily have links to the partnership and this created some challenges.

The third recommendation related to enabling access to food banks and community shops. The group had learned that many food banks required residents to provide personal data and to have received referrals, such as from local churches, in order to access support. The suggestion was made that this could have GDPR implications, in terms of data use and storage.

In respect of the fourth recommendation, Cabinet was advised that the group had considered potential gaps in provision geographically. As part of this process, a gap in provision had been identified by the Task Group in Rubery and it was felt that residents living in this ward should be able to access a Food Bank within Bromsgrove District.

The final recommendation focused on developing a network of food banks across the District. It was suggested that participation in this network should be a prerequisite in order for groups that were operating these venues to be permitted to apply for Council funding and other support.

In concluding her remarks, Councillor Gray suggested that the Task Group's findings should not be considered in isolation. Instead, she urged Cabinet to consider this matter in a wider context, in terms of the impact of the cost of living on local residents. Members were asked to note that it was within the same context that the Impact of Heatwaves Task Group had been launched and alongside concerns about managing the costs of heatwaves was the concern that many residents had about covering heating costs during the winter months.

Following the presentation of the report, Cabinet thanked Councillor Gray and the other Members of the Task Group for their hard work and report. There was general consensus amongst Cabinet Members that recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 5 could be endorsed as printed in the Task Group's report and that these proposals, once enacted, would have a positive impact on the local community. Indeed, it was reported that some of the actions proposed in the report were already in place and this was welcomed by Cabinet Members.

In respect of recommendation 3, Members commented that the Council had no control over how Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups managed food banks, including the data they gathered. As such, each of the community groups involved in co-ordinating food banks and community shops were responsible for how they managed data and for their compliance with GDPR regulations.

Concerns were raised about the wording of the Task Group's fourth recommendation. It was noted that the Council had not previously been involved in establishing and running a food bank in a particular location and therefore this recommendation would not be appropriate to take forward in its current form. However, the suggestion was made that this recommendation could potentially be supported subject to amending the wording of the proposal to reflect the Council's role working to support VCS groups that might wish to be involved in establishing a food bank in Rubery. It was with this in mind that the following changes to the wording of recommendation 4 were proposed:

"That the Council endeavour to investigate, under the auspices of existing arrangements available to the Council, such as the Bromsgrove Partnership, whether communities in areas of the district that do not currently have foodbanks require this provision, and that the Council make best effort to *support the local community and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)* to create a food bank in Rubery where a need has already been identified.

Consideration was given to the proposed amendment to the wording of recommendation 4 and as part of that process, Councillor Gray, as Chairman of the Task Group, and Councillor McDonald, as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, were consulted on their views. It was noted that the wording of the Task Group's recommendations had been agreed collectively by Members of the group and, as such, it was suggested to the Cabinet that the Task Group should be permitted to reconvene to consider this proposal further. It was therefore agreed that this recommendation should be referred back to the Task Group, via the Overview and Scrutiny Board, for further consideration.

**RESOLVED** that

- 1) That the Council update its website to include contact details of all foodbanks in the district which wish to be on the list. The Council will ensure that the webpage links to the foodbanks' websites and/or other contact details of the foodbanks, such as telephone and social media, are up-to-date and that information on how to get in touch is easily accessible.
- 2) That all organisations providing foodbanks receive the appropriate and necessary support and resources from Bromsgrove District Council, which is proportionate and equivalent to their size and what they require. In the transition period, if the organisation is growing, appropriate support and funding needs to be allocated.
- 3) That the Council develop a consistent universal understanding/guidelines of what level of recording of users' personal information is required for the needs of the community engaged in the foodbank service without breaching the GDPR legislation. That the Council recognise there might be specific recording requirements as conditions attached to accessing specific funding streams.

- 4) That the Council continues to develop opportunities to enable foodbank organisations to come together as part of a network to support each other and to promote the sustainability of the help being provided to the community across the district. That the Council makes clear that joining the network is a pre-requisite if applying for Council funding, should this become available in future.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Overview and Scrutiny Board that the Foodbank and Community Shop Provision Task Group be reconvened to consider the proposed amendments to the wording of recommendation 4, as detailed in the preamble above.

The meeting closed at 7.25 p.m.

Chairman