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Overview and Scrutiny Board
9th December 2024

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

9TH DECEMBER 2024, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), S. T. Nock (Vice-Chairman), A. Bailes, R. Bailes, A. M. Dale, E. M. S. Gray, R. J. Hunter, B. Kumar, J. D. Stanley, D. J. Nicholl and J. Robinson (Substitute)

Observers: Councillor K. J. May - Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships and Enabling
Councillor B. M. McEldowney - Cabinet Member of Leisure and Climate Change
Councillor K. Taylor – Cabinet Member for Planning, Licensing and WRS

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, Ms. N Cummings, Mrs. R. Bamford, Mr. M. Dunphy, Ms. M. Worsfold, Ms Karimi Fini, Mr. M. Sliwinski and Mrs S. Woodfield

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor S.A. Robinson.

It was noted that Councillor J.W. Robinson was a substitute member for Councillor S.A. Robinson.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

No declarations of interest were received nor of any whipping arrangements.

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BROMSGROVE PLAY AUDIT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Assistant Director of Planning and Leisure Services presented the Bromsgrove Play Audit and Investment Strategy report to the Board as detailed below:

- The report set out a factual analysis of the play equipment within the District, detailing Council owned sites, location and who managed the specific areas.

- The Play Audit and Investment Strategy sought to address deficiencies in play provision across the District, allowing all households, where reasonably practicable, to have access to good quality play spaces within walking times of up to 10 to 15 minutes.
- Responding to the recommendations in the Leisure and Culture Strategy for Bromsgrove, a detailed Play Audit and Investment Strategy had been completed with costings also included.
- There were currently 85 play areas across the District. A total of 40 were owned and managed by Bromsgrove District Council, the other 45 were owned and managed by other Organisations including Parish Councils, Community Associations and private Management Companies. The Bromsgrove Play Audit which considered the accessibility of play provision, considered the contribution of all 85 play spaces. The Bromsgrove Play Investment Strategy was focused on the 40 play spaces for which Bromsgrove District Council had responsibility.
- The formation of the Cabinet Advisory Group (CAG) provided some useful discussions including the condition of play areas, approaching “end of life”. As instructed by CAG, Officers carried out a public consultation, with a useful session being held with the Consultant to discuss Foxgrove Way in more detail.
- The Assistant Director of Planning and Leisure Services concluded the presentation, adding that the analysis had been useful to define the location, condition and the work that was required for the play equipment. It was also fundamental that decisions regarding funding should be done in a controlled and managed way. S106 contributions would also be a factor when allocating the appropriate funding.

During consideration of the item, Members discussed a number of points:

- Members expressed the view that it was disappointing the Consultant was not present for the meeting. – It was advised that the consultancy was relatively small and specialised but that the matter would be addressed.
- It was also queried why consultancy was necessary for the project. – It was explained that there had been an opportunity for funding through salary savings. Various recommendations from Cabinet had been set in terms of the leisure strategy and required completion within short timescales.
- Members discussed that the CAG sessions had been productive and demonstrated that the forums were beneficial.

- It was queried how the assessments had been carried out, in particular, with regard to the number of households in the District, having accessibility to play areas within a walking time of up to 10 to 15 minutes. Members also expressed the view that the quality of the equipment should have been more of a consideration over the distance it took to access the area. - Members were advised that accessibility has been cross referenced with demographic health data including Inherited Metabolic Diseases (IMD), Health Deprivation and Disability with the population aged 12 and under including child obesity.
- The Board also queried if the necessary British and European Standards had been considered in significant detail, in particular, concerning the critical fall height. – It was advised that The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) guidance determined the adequate fall height. Officers agreed to obtain an official guidance and report back to Members as an action.
- The Members expressed the need to review areas with no play area provision also as part of the assessment.
- The Board discussed areas being reviewed at a late stage in the process and expressed the view, could run the risk of losing its provision, particularly, if the play area were deemed to be unsafe. – The Board was advised that some areas were being reviewed later as they were not considered an urgent issue and would be the subject of a public consultation.
- Members queried if the review standards were considered nationally acceptable? – Members were informed that there were national standards for what was considered acceptable and unacceptable.
- The Board queried The Play Audit and Investment Strategy which set out an approach that would improve the accessibility of play provision so that 82.5% of households (baseline 81.7%) in the District had access to a play space within a walking time of up to 10 to 15 minutes. Members expressed their view that the statistics within the report were not considered adequate. – It was noted that the review considered walking distance, quality and also in areas where improvements were required. Some areas were also being converted from local to neighbourhood play areas.
- The capital funding bids timeframe was also considered, suggesting that Officers provided Ward Councillors with the necessary paperwork to assist with the process. – Members were advised that finances had been set aside but if the specified period lapsed, Officers would be required to discuss funding with the Board through the budget setting process to request the necessary monies. Members were also advised that there was a

specific form which required completion for requests of capital spending.

- Typographical errors were discussed for the All Play Provision by Ward document. Officers sought to amend the necessary information.
- Members discussed play areas not being considered for upgrading for 1-3 years. It was queried if a business case could be considered to look at profiling and sequencing some areas? – The Chief Executive informed the Board that the finance and funding for the review (Tranche 1) had already been considered. Tranche 2 was for consideration in the new year and that further proposals could be reviewed at that point.
- The Board also discussed the population forecasts which were shown as out of date. With the new local plan which would be a necessary consideration, would the Council be Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) compliant? – Members were advised that Funds were collected from the Developer to pay for work on development sites and that legislation governed that process.
- Members also queried if it could be a consideration for Parish Councils to get access to funding to provide a fairer and more equitable process. – It was advised that Parish Councils could apply for the necessary funding, although they had not had a comprehensive presentation but communications were in progress.
- It was also queried how the consultancy fees had been calculated? – The Board was advised that an agreement with the Consultant to pay on an hourly rate was discussed to better manage the costs, based on extra works and scrutiny.
- The Board also queried how some areas were being measured which were not being replaced or reviewed for a significant period? – Members were asked to note that some areas were planned for larger play area or neighbourhood play areas.
- Members also queried if there would be any additional consultancy costs if work has not been carried out correctly? – It was advised that the brief set had been met and had not been carried out incorrectly. Members expressed the view that some had not been given the opportunity to review the brief and would have been helpful to review prior to the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting. - The Leader of the Council informed Members that the brief was discussed and reviewed during CAG meetings with the consultant and it was thought that all Members had been briefed accordingly.

- The Leader of the Council expressed the view that an audit for Parish Council play area provision should be carried out and for transparency and scrutiny, be reviewed through the Finance and Budget Working Group.
- Members also queried if, as part of the assessment process, there could be more consideration to the quality of the play areas.
– It was advised Officers would be working through improvements as part of the review.
- It was also discussed by the Board if CAG could consider as part of their process, review combining some areas to save money in the long term.
- The Chairman queried why some calculations in the report were unspecified ie the use of 10/15 minutes. – It was noted that it was deemed acceptable for residents to walk to a larger play area, for example.
- Members also requested that the wording for Belbroughton and Romsley Ward documentation in the report be reviewed and amended accordingly. Officers agreed to review this as an action.

Also during consideration of the item, an amendment to number 2) recommendation was proposed by Councillor R. Hunter. The recommendation was:

“That the approach to capital investment as presented in, The Bromsgrove Play Audit and Investment Strategy (Appendix 2) is accepted and that officers are requested to prepare bids *in consultation with Ward Members* for capital funding, as applicable, to be considered in due course and in the context of other funding bids”.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor R. Hunter and seconded by Councillor D. Nicholl.

The Board agreed to endorse the proposed change to the wording of the Bromsgrove Play Audit and Investment Strategy recommendation.

RECOMMENDED that

The Cabinet RESOLVE that:-

- 1) The approach to improve the accessibility of equipped children’s play as presented in the Bromsgrove Play Assessment (Appendix 1) is adopted.
- 2) That the approach to capital investment as presented in, The Bromsgrove Play Audit and Investment Strategy (Appendix 2) is accepted and that officers are requested to prepare bids in consultation

with Ward Members for capital funding, as applicable, to be considered in due course and in the context of other funding bids.

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BROMSGROVE LOCAL HERITAGE LIST - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Principal Conservation Officer presented the Bromsgrove Local Heritage List to Members and discussed the following:

- The report updated Members on the tasks which were undertaken by the Conservation Team to prepare the Bromsgrove Local Heritage List (LHL). Work for the Parishes of Alvechurch, Beoley, Belbroughton and Fairfield and Dodford with Grafton had been completed and Members were being asked to recommend to Council that the final version of the lists be approved. The report also gave an update of progress for other areas within the District.
- Draft lists for Alvechurch, Beoley, Belbroughton and Fairfield and Dodford with Grafton Parishes were compiled earlier in the year, ready for consultation. The lists would add 140 properties to the draft LHL, covering a diverse range of properties including houses, schools, village halls, places of worship and canal infrastructure.
- A six-week consultation period had commenced on Monday 27th May 2024. Letters were sent to all owners/occupiers providing information about the consultation, including the listing for their property.
- Conservation Officers had attended conservation events in village halls for each parish. Information on the LHL was made available and Conservation Officers answered questions accordingly.
- Following completion of the Consultation process and having considered all the comments received, the LHL for each parish was finalised. The Conservation Team were asking Cabinet to recommend that Council approve the LHL list which would then be a material consideration in the planning process.
- Work was continuing with the lists for Bromsgrove Town and the parishes of Lickey and Blackwell and Wythall. In relation to Bromsgrove Town, a meeting had been held with the History Group of the Bromsgrove Society.
- The Conservation Team had also reviewed better use of the GIS and databases to digitise as much of the process as possible for efficiency and to pre-empt changes likely to flow from the corporate GIS strategy.
- The new Conservation Officer had commenced work on Bournheath Parish. The work for Wythall and Bromsgrove, subject to the input from the Bromsgrove Society, was nearer

completion. Work on Lickey and Blackwell had been delayed due to the Principal Conservation Officer responding to the consultation on the first four parishes. Relevant Officers were proposed to go out to consultation and then moving onto preparing another tranche of draft lists.

Following the presentation Members thanked the Conservation Team for the tasks undertaken to prepare the Bromsgrove Local Heritage List (LHL), noting that it was positive that some areas of the District were getting recognition.

RECOMMENDED that

The Cabinet RECOMMEND that:-

- 1) The Local Heritage List at Appendix 1 for the following parishes is adopted.
Alvechurch
Beoley
Belbroughton and Fairfield
Dodford with Grafton
- 2) The wording of the Officer Scheme of Delegations for the Local Heritage List be updated as set on in Appendix 2.
- 3) The amended Local Heritage List Strategy set out at Appendix 3 be approved.

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TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD OF LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROPERTY SERVICES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING.

There was no urgent business for consideration.

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CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was discussed by the Board as follows:

- The Democratic Services Officer informed Members of an addition to the Cabinet Work Programme, since the last Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting with Bin Replacements being considered by Cabinet on 7th January 2025.
- The Board agreed to the proposal made by the Chairman that the Food Waste Business Case and Associated Waste Related Issues item, to be considered by Cabinet on 7th January 2025, be pre-scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 6th January 2025.

- A Member requested that the Cabinet Membership be reviewed and amended on the Cabinet Work Programme. Officers agreed to action the request accordingly.
- Members queried why an Independent Remuneration Panel Recommendation meeting was being held when a pay review was imminent. - Members were advised that the item was an annual review, in advance of the municipal year.
- The Bromsgrove District Plan Consultation key decision was discussed. Members expressed the view that there should be a full consultation carried out with public engagement being part of the formal process. – It was advised by the Chief Executive that the purpose of the report was to enable Officers to go out to consultation. The report would be prepared with options for Council and Cabinet to agree the basis of the consultation and would also be available for the Overview and Scrutiny Board to consider the report prior to Council and Cabinet review. Members also expressed the view that the consultation period was considered short and that an effective consultation period was required. The Leader of the Council advised Members that timeframes would be considered based on Government policy.

RESOLVED that the content of the Cabinet Work Programme be noted as per the preamble above.

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Board work programme was considered by Members.

The Democratic Services Officer agreed to add the Food Waste Business Case and Associated Waste Related Issues to the Work Programme, to be pre-scrutinised by the Board on 6th January 2025.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTION SHEET

The Democratic Services Officer informed Members of two additions to the Cabinet Work Programme, since the last Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting which were as follows:

- The repainting of the lampposts in Windsor Street for the Levelling Up project would be commencing in the Spring/Summer 2025 (weather permitting).
- The review of wording in the report regarding Climate Change Implications for the Levelling Up project would be implemented in future reports.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Action sheet be noted.

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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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 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:-

<u>Item No</u>	<u>Paragraph</u>
10	3

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TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 19TH NOVEMBER 2024

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 19th November 2024 were considered.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 19th November 2024 be agreed as a true and correct record.

The meeting closed at 7.15 p.m.

Chairman

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