

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW BOARD

TUESDAY, 27TH APRIL 2010 AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors S. R. Colella (Chairman), Mrs. M. Bunker (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. R. L. Dent, Mrs. J. M. L. A. Griffiths, D. L. Pardoe, Mrs. C. J. Spencer and L. J. Turner

Observers: Councillor Mrs. J. Dyer M.B.E.

Officers: Mr. J. Staniland, Mrs. C. Felton, Mr. M. Carr and Ms. A. Scarce

68/09 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

69/09 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

No declarations of interest or whipping arrangements were received.

70/09 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Overview Board held on 30th March 2010 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

71/09 **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PROPOSAL - RAILWAY STATION DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

The Chairman thanked the Executive Director for Planning and Regeneration, Regulation and Housing Services (PRRH) and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration for attending the meeting and gave a brief outline of the original Overview and Scrutiny proposal which had been brought before the Overview Board at its meeting on 30th March 2010. The Board was informed that the representatives from Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and Network Rail had declined to attend the Overview Board meeting as they felt it not appropriate at this time.

The Executive Director for PRRH explained that this was a new project to him and he had only attended one meeting which had taken place at Network Rail headquarters. The Executive Director for PRRH advised that he was unable to comment on why the representatives from WCC and Network Rail had chosen not to attend the Overview Board meeting. The Executive Director for PRRH confirmed that the proposal was to move the Bromsgrove Railway Station to the former oil terminal and goods yard and this site was currently

leased by Network Rail to a company called D B Shenkner and Network Rail were working with them with a view to buying out the lease.

The works had currently been costed out at £12.5million. It was possible that those costs could be reduced by the time a detailed scheme had been produced. However, the only funds currently available were £5million from WCC via the regional funding allocation and £2million from London Midland. There was a shortfall therefore of £5.5m. Network Rail were currently investigating the possibility of getting Bromsgrove Railway Station re-prioritised, which would assist with this gap, and at the potential of phasing the associated car park, or alternative commercial funding arrangements for the operation of the car park. The Executive Director of PRRH confirmed that WCC and Network Rail were working towards narrowing the funding gap.

Members then discussed with the Executive Director for PRRH the following issues:

- Electrification of the track and the need for these to be done.
- Lengthening of the platform, the size of the ticket office and car parking facilities.
- The adverse affect of a phased car parking scheme, on the surrounding area.
- The negative effect of the uncertainty of this project on the local community's views of the Council, although the decisions made were outside of the Council's control.
- The long term effect on the regeneration of the Town Centre – the Executive Director PRRH confirmed that this point had been stressed at the relevant meetings.
- The limited information available to the Council.
- The need for planning permission by Network Rail.

The Portfolio Holder added further background information and confirmed that five weeks ago she had attended the Integrated Transport Forum at WCC at which time was told that the funding was available and that by December 2010 work would be starting, only to be informed two weeks later that £5million had been withdrawn from the funding. It was not clear who had withdrawn this funding.

The Railway Station project had been ongoing since 2000 and was no further forward, which was a great concern. The view was expressed that the residents of Bromsgrove should be aware that the Council was very concerned about the situation and it was being proactive. Resident parking within the area would potentially cause a huge problem and it was confirmed that this would be looked at if the Railway Station goes ahead, Members felt that car parking was already an issue and that this should be addressed immediately. The Executive Director for PRRH said that he would take Members concerns back to the relevant Head of Service.

The Board requested that a number of questions be put to the representatives from WCC and Network Rail, together with a further request for their attendance at a future Overview Board meeting.

Suggested questions:

1. What is the outline budget for the railway station development?
2. What options are being considered for resolving the funding gap to finance the railway station development?
3. What other options are being considered if it is not possible to finance the current plans for development?
4. What are the plans for consultation on the development, who is to be consulted and what are the timescales for consultation?
5. What consideration has been given to the increased need for car parking in the local neighbourhood? Would extra capacity meet the increased need for car parking?

The Executive Director for PHHR confirmed that he would contact the representatives from WCC and Network Rail. The Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services asked that it be stressed to them that this was a very important issue for Bromsgrove residents and was causing some concern and Members were very keen to be able to communicate with residents as to what the situation was.

Members discussed a “hopper bus” scheme which had been previously raised and asked whether this was to be taken up, as it could be useful to ease the street parking issue. The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration advised that she would take this up with the Integrated Transport Forum at the next meeting and report back to the Overview Board.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Officer provide the Executive Director PRRH with the formal questions to put to the WCC and Network Rail representatives and any response be passed to Members of the Board as soon as it is received.

72/09

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL DEMOCRACY TASK GROUP
(TASK GROUP CHAIRMAN: COUNCILLOR L. J. TURNER)

The Chairman of the Community Involvement in Local Democracy Task Group advised the Board that the draft recommendations for the Task Group had now been agreed and the final report would be brought to the Overview Board meeting on 1st June 2010. It would then be presented to the Cabinet meeting to be held on 30th June 2010. The Chairman of the Task Group would be on annual leave on 30th June 2010 and asked the Chairman of the Overview Board to present the report on his behalf, together with the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services.

The Chairman of the Task Group advised that the draft recommendations had been presented to both the Equality and Diversity Forum and Corporate Management Team (CMT) meeting. CMT had discussed both the feasibility of the recommendations and the financial implications of them.

The areas covered by the recommendations were then discussed in detail by the Board. The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that they had tried to choose recommendations that were both strategic and flexible, but specific enough to

produce tangible outcomes, which would help to improve the community engagement in the democratic process and have a positive affect on some of the National Indicators within the Place Survey. The Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services advised that already, requests for information on the Task Group had been received from other authorities and it would be possible to identify from these some capacity for working in partnership with these districts or at County level.

The Board complimented the Chairman of the Task Group on the wide ranging areas that had been covered by the Task Group.

73/09 **VERBAL UPDATE ON THE CHAIRMAN'S QUARTERLY MEETING WITH THE LEADER**

The Chairman advised that the reason for the Chairman's quarterly meeting with the Leader was to maintain a regular update between the Boards and the Cabinet in order to make the Overview and Scrutiny process more effective. The following issues had been discussed:

- The attendance of portfolio holders at task group and Board meetings. It was confirmed that since this meeting had taken place, portfolio holders had attended meetings.
- A better definition and understanding of the respective roles of both the Overview and Scrutiny Boards.
- Pressure on officer time, particularly in respect of attendance at task group meetings. The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that this should be addressed as part of the planning of the new Work Programme. The Corporate Management Team had already been approached in respect of topics and suitable dates for investigation, for inclusion in the Work Programmes and planning.
- The need to build upon a strategic approach to work planning and plan over a longer period, to consider fewer items, and to focus on "high value" investigations with a clearer purpose. The inclusion of terms of reference for each topic would be essential in focusing the Boards.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

The Chairman reminded Members that if there was any particular item they wished to be raised at future meetings with the Leader, the Scrutiny Officer should be contact in the first instance to ensure that these were passed on.

74/09 **FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

The Board considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions 28th April to 31st August 2010. Members gave consideration to the following items:

- Item 3 Economic Development Strategy – the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services confirmed that this would be brought before Cabinet on 28th April 2010.
- Item 8 Garden Waste Service (Future Development) – Members were concerned about further changes to the Garden Waste Service and

agreed that it would be appropriate for them to receive a report on the future developments at the next Board meeting.

- Item 16 Victoria Ground (Expressions of interest) – the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services provided Members with background information on complications which had arisen on this issue in respect of restrictions under the covenant.
- Item 19 Benefit Take-Up Strategy – the Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services assured Members that although the Benefit Take-Up Strategy had been delayed, it would not affect the actual take-up or payment of benefits.
- Item 23 Arts and Events Strategy 2010/11 to 2013/14 – Members were advised that the draft Arts and Events Strategy had been brought to the Scrutiny Board meeting on 23rd March 2010.

RSOLVED that Officers ask the Head of Environmental Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder to provide a report and attend the Overview Board meeting on 1st June 2010, on the Garden Waste Service Future Development.

75/09 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Work Programme was considered by the Board and the Scrutiny Officer confirmed that the following items would be included in the agenda for the Board meeting on 1st June 2010:

- Civil Parking Enforcement – Members felt in view of the issues discussed earlier in the meeting in respect of the Railway Station, it was important that a report on Civil Parking Enforcement was brought to the Board meeting on 1st June 2010. Members also requested that the Head of Service and the relevant officer from Worcestershire County Council (WCC) be invited to attend.
- The Worcestershire Older Peoples' Strategy – Members were informed that the Director for Policy, Performance and Partnerships, together with a representative from Worcestershire County Council, would attend the Board meeting on 1st June 2010 to present this item. The Scrutiny Officer asked Members to give consideration to relevant questions they would like to be considered.
- Bromsgrove Planning and Licensing Policies – the Scrutiny Officer confirmed that he would contact the relevant Head of Services in order to ascertain a date when it would be appropriate to consider these items.
- Procurement – this item would be carried over for consideration on the 2010/11 Work Programme.

The Board was advised that the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Meeting held on 15th June 2010 would be used as a Work Programme planning exercise for the Joint Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Boards in order to plan more effectively for the forthcoming municipal year. If Members had any items

which they wished to put forward for the Work Programmes then these should be sent to the Scrutiny Officer as soon as possible. Members were also reminded that prior to this meeting a short training session would take place.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme be amended with the changes outlined above.

The meeting closed at 7.40 p.m.

Chairman