

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY STEERING BOARD**

**TUESDAY, 3RD APRIL 2007 AT 6.00 PM**

PRESENT: Councillor Miss D. H. Campbell JP (Chairman), C. J. K. Wilson (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. J. M. Boswell, Mrs. A. E. Doyle, J. T. Duddy, W. R. Newnes, S. R. Peters, N. Psirides JP and S. P. Shannon.

**Observers:** Councillor D. McGrath.

**Officers:** Mr. K. Dicks (was present until 6.30 pm), Mr. P. Street, Mr. D. Hammond, Mrs. S. Sellers and Miss D. McCarthy.

115/06 **APOLOGIES**

No apologies were received.

116/06 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

In relation to agenda item 4, the work of the Worcestershire County Council's Highways Maintenance Scrutiny Task Group, the following declaration of interest was made:

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>
S. P. Shannon	Personal. Member of Worcestershire County Council.

In relation to agenda item 8, the Executive Cabinet Agenda for 4th April 2007 and specifically, agenda item 17 on the Executive Cabinet Agenda relating to Bromsgrove Rovers, the following declaration of interest was made:

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Nature of Interest</u>
W. R. Newnes	Personal. Involved with holding private functions at Bromsgrove Rovers

No whipping arrangements were made.

117/06 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Steering Board held on 6th March 2007 were submitted.

**RESOLVED:** that the Minutes be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

118/06 **COUNTY'S HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE SCRUTINY TASK GROUP**

On behalf of the Scrutiny Steering Board, the Chairman introduced County Councillor Mrs. E. B. Tucker (Chairman of Worcestershire County Council's Highways Maintenance Scrutiny Task Group) and Councillor W. G. Stewart (Member of the Highways Maintenance Scrutiny Task Group).

Both members gave a detailed talk on the work carried out by the Highways Maintenance Scrutiny Task Group. The Board was informed that a wide and comprehensive study had been undertaken although it had not been exhaustive due to need to keep to the timescale of 6 months. Appendix 4 to the Scrutiny Report was referred to which gave a list of dates of evidence sessions and task group activity including those who had been consulted.

Members of the Board asked numerous questions and there was a discussion on various aspects of the scrutiny work including potholes, footways, insurance claims, public satisfaction, standard of maintenance and inspection work, experiences at other local authorities in the UK, financial resources and recommendations for improvement put forward by the Task Group.

The Board congratulated members of the County Council's Highways Maintenance Scrutiny Task Group for an impressive written report. The Chairman thanked both members for taking the time to attend the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** that the written and verbal reports, as well as the County's Executive Cabinet's response relating to the Worcestershire County Council's Highways Maintenance Scrutiny Task Group, be noted.

119/06 **HEALTH SCRUTINY UPDATE**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor McGrath, the District Council's representative on Worcestershire County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members considered the report in detail and Councillor McGrath answered questions regarding his report which covered: Worcestershire Primary Care Trust; Worcestershire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust; Ambulance Service Respond Times; and Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust. Other comments made related to respite for carers and the out of hours service. Councillor McGrath stated that his report might be useful to other members of the Council.

On behalf of the Board, the Chairman thanked Councillor McGrath for his report and for attending the meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the report be noted; and
- (b) that the report be circulated to all other members of the Council for their information.

120/06 **HIGH HEDGES**

The Head of Planning and Environment Services presented the report relating to High Hedges. An information pack was distributed at the meeting to members of the Board for their information. It was explained that the information packs were sent to members of the public who enquired about the service.

The Board was reminded that involving the Council should be a last resort and that the Council could only intervene once all other avenues for resolving a hedge dispute had been exhausted. The information pack explained what the Government expected complainants to do before submitting an application and it was stated that the Council tree officers also gave fairly extensive verbal advice to potential applicants to assist them.

Members were informed that the Council had not yet taken a application forward as out of the three which had been submitted, one had been rejected due to the applicant not taking the required steps before applying and two had been withdrawn by the applicants after an agreement had been reached. It was explained that the fee was returned if an application was withdrawn before the site visit took place.

Following a definition of "income support" in relation to the reduced fee, there was a concern that not all who could be entitled to the concession of £200 would necessarily be aware and therefore it was requested that it be clarified on the application form.

**RESOLVED:** that the Head of Planning and Environment be requested to amend the application form in order that it was clear who was entitled to the concession of £200.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the Executive Cabinet be requested to ensure that the High Hedges fee remain at £500 with a concession of £200 for those receiving Income Support for a further 12 months before being reviewed again by officers.

121/06 **WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the future work of the Scrutiny Steering Board and Scrutiny Task Group Review dates.

**RESOLVED:** that the following Work Programme, including Scrutiny Task Group Review dates, be approved –

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Date of Consideration</b>	<b>Other Information</b>
Health Scrutiny Update	Quarterly (March/June/Sept/Dec)	This Council's representative on Worcestershire County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to provide an update report.

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Date of Consideration</b>	<b>Other Information</b>
Refuse and Recycling Scrutiny Proposal	5th June 2007	As agreed at the Board Meeting in March, the composite scrutiny proposal be considered by the Board as an area to be scrutinised.
Future Work Programme	5th June 2007	Members of the Scrutiny Steering Board will need to decide what other issues will be included in its rolling work programme.

Scrutiny Task Group Review Meetings:

<b>Task Group</b>	<b>Date of Review</b>	<b>Other Information</b>
Culture and Community Services	June 2007	Task Group to reconvene for a review meeting June 2007.
Use of Consultants	July 2007	Task Group to reconvene for a review meeting July 2007.
BDHT	December 2007	Task Group to reconvene for a review meeting December 2007.
Flytipping	March/April 2008	Task Group to reconvene for a review meeting March/April 2008

**122/06 ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE NEXT MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE CABINET**

Consideration was given to the items on the agenda for the Executive Cabinet meeting which was scheduled to be held on 4th April 2007.

Comments were made regarding two items on the agenda. The first was agenda item 15 which related to the progress report and revised strategy on the de-commissioning of hostels. Points made were:

- the disappointment over the length of time waiting on the planning application, particularly as the hostel had been vacated in September 2006;
- that it be recommended to the Executive Cabinet that Wythall Hostel be sold at auction; and
- that any funds left over from the £21,000 Bed and Breakfast Budget being transferred to BDHT for 2 years which is not spent be transferred back to the Council.

Comments raised on agenda item 17 which related to Bromsgrove Rovers were as follows:

- concern that the Portfolio Holder had not been consulted on the report;
- concern over the length of time negotiations with the Club were taking considering it had been agreed by Executive Cabinet in July 2005; and

- that paragraph 4.1 of the report be amended to make it clear that the annual rent to be paid was £13,700 and not a peppercorn rent.

**RESOLVED**: that the comments raised and listed above be put forward by the Chairman of the Scrutiny Steering Board at the Executive Cabinet Meeting on 4th April 2007.

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm

Chairman