

# **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **PARISH COUNCILS' FORUM**

Tuesday, 5th April 2005, at 6.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor D. C. Norton (Chairman)

| <b>Parish</b>                | <b>Representative(s)</b>  |
|------------------------------|---|
| Barnt Green                  | Mrs. D. Warren (Clerk)  |
| Belbroughton                 | Mr. C. R. Scurrall  |
| Bentley Pauncefoot           | Mrs. R. M. M. Boss (Chairman)<br>Mr. C. M. Sansom                         |
| Beoley                       | Miss P. Harrison (Clerk)  |
| Bournheath                   | Mrs. S. Davies  |
| Catshill and North Marlbrook | Mr. P. J. Baker (Chairman)<br>Mrs. C. Russam (Clerk)<br>Mr. G. F. Witcomb |
| Clent                        | Mrs. P. A. Harris (Clerk)<br>Mr. D. N. Faraday                            |
| Cofton Hackett               | Mrs. P. Foxall (Clerk)<br>Mr. B. Bridgewater                              |
| Hagley                       | Mrs. C. Humphries (Clerk)<br>Mr. A. G. Lewis                              |
| Lickey and Blackwell         | Mr. R. Brown (Chairman)<br>Mrs. J. A. Casey (Clerk)                       |
| Romsley                      | Mr. I. A. Hodgetts (Chairman)   |
| Stoke                        | Mrs. T. Roll (Chairman)<br>Mr. P. Callaway (Clerk)<br>Mrs. J. Birmingham  |
| Wythall                      | Mrs. S. J. Baxter (Chairman)<br>Miss P. Harrison (Clerk)                  |

### 1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from:-

| <b>Parish</b>      | <b>Representative</b>         |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Barnt Green        | Mrs. E. M. Buckett (Chairman) |
| Belbroughton       | Mr. R. E. Copley (Clerk)      |
| Bentley Pauncefoot | Mrs. T. Green (Clerk)         |
| Beoley             | Mrs. J. D. Luck (Chairman)    |
| Hunnington         | Mrs. L. Teese (Clerk)         |

### 2. **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 16TH DECEMBER 2004, AND MATTERS ARISING**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Councils' Forum held on 16th December 2004 were submitted.

It was **AGREED** that the Minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. **DECriminalISATION OF PARKING INFRINGEMENTS IN THE DISTRICT**

Mr. S. Martin, Transport Administration Manager, addressed the Meeting and referred to the Report which outlined the Decriminalised Parking Enforcement issues. He highlighted the fact that Decriminalised Parking Enforcement was viewed by Worcestershire County Council as a key factor in the Countywide Transportation Plan Strategy, and added that those authorities within, or near to, Worcestershire which had already adopted Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (for example, Worcester City, Wychavon and Stratford-on-Avon), had all reported a reduction in travelling times, together with an increase in trade for local businesses.

Mr. Martin explained that any proposals for the implementation of Decriminalised Parking Enforcement by the District Council would follow a decision based upon a feasibility study which was expected to commence in the very near future. In the meantime, Mr. Martin re-affirmed that infringements should be reported to the Police, but stated that he would be willing to make a note of any of these reported incidents so as to be able to monitor the current situation and/or assist with any further queries.

This was noted.

4. **PARISH TRANSPORT SURVEY - 2004 SURVEY RESULTS**

Mr. Martin referred to the contents of his Report and stated that the publication of the survey results had been inadvertently delayed due to operational problems within his Department. However, he explained that the Romsley survey had almost reached its conclusion and that subsequent surveys, in Hunnington and Barnt Green, would then follow.

The Chairman added that Worcestershire County Council were investigating the current transport system throughout the County, and stated that he expected any survey findings, proposals or further information would be available in due course.

This was noted.

5. **DRAFT ALLOCATION CRITERIA FOR RURAL HOUSING - CONSULTATION**

Mr. A. Coel, Head of Strategic Housing, gave a presentation to the Meeting on the development of allocation criteria specifically for the letting of properties developed for letting in rural areas. He referred to a recent Housing Needs Survey which revealed an annual shortfall of over 400 affordable homes throughout the District, and he outlined the role of the Council in seeking to provide affordable housing.

Mr. Coel explained how the allocation criteria and rural lettings policy would operate, together with the assessment procedures for applicants. He stated that full details about the allocation criteria and lettings policy would be distributed to the Parish Councils for consultation purposes in the near future prior to the full adoption and operation of the scheme in due course. Mr. Coel then responded to several questions from the floor, following which the Chairman thanked him for his presentation.

This was noted.

6. **CLEAN NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ENVIRONMENT BILL**

Mr. D. Williams, Director of Environmental Services, addressed the Meeting and gave a presentation on the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Bill. He explained that the proposed legislation was to strengthen and expand existing legislation to combat "environmental crime" and which would provide a clean and safer environment for residents and visitors to the District, affecting many of the front line services provided by the Council (that is, not just within the Environmental Services aspect of the Council's work, but Community Safety, Depot Services, Planning Services and Legal Services).

Mr. Williams also referred to the increased powers available to Parish Councils under the proposed legislation, especially in relation to the levying of fixed-penalty notices, and how these powers conform with the Government's programme in respect of "Localism" and the devolution of powers to other public bodies.

Mr. Williams then responded to several questions from the floor, many of which showed support for the proposals but expressed concern at the possible costs of policing and enforcing any new legislation.

This was noted.

7. **PARISH CHARTER**

Mr. Harrison referred to an Officer-level meeting he had attended in January 2005, relating to the production of a Countywide Parish Charter, involving the Worcestershire County Council and four of the district councils within the County, and reported that he had recently received a "Final Draft no. 5" Charter document.

From an initial view of the document, he indicated that there appeared to be some differences between the County Council's draft Charter and the proposed Parish Charter drawn up by the District Council, some clauses of which he considered to be less favourable to the parish councils in the District.

Mr. Harrison stated that detailed consideration would be given to the County Council's draft Charter and that he would report further to a future Meeting of the Forum.

This was noted.

8. **CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE**

Mr. K. Dicks, Corporate Director (Resources), addressed the Meeting and reported that the Customer Service Centre had opened, as planned, on the 1st March 2005 and was initially providing a limited range of services, including Revenues and Benefits, Cash Office and some Environmental Health Services.

He stated that, as part of the general "roll-out" of Council Services, Depot Services enquiries would also be dealt with at the Customer Service Centre, together with the provision of services by the Police and Bromsgrove District Housing Trust.

This was noted.

9. **CONCURRENT FUNCTIONS**

Mr. Dicks reported that he had commenced work on a new scheme for the payment of Concurrent Functions, with a view to establishing a more equitable method of payments for the 2005/2006 budget. He anticipated that the new scheme mechanism would be in operation in time for the 2006/2007 budget process.

This was noted.

10. **STREET CLEANING AND LITTER COLLECTION**

Mr. J. Parkinson, Interim Head of Depot Services, introduced himself to the Meeting. He reported that he was seeking to establish a new strategy in respect of the Council Services which were provided by the Depot. With reference to street cleaning and litter collection, he stated that he intended to review the service as a whole, examine the equipment and machinery which would be needed, and re-assess the frequency of work to be carried out in various areas of the District.

After responding to a number of questions from the floor, Mr. Parkinson added that he envisaged developing the Depot Service with the help of the parish councils, but that it would take some time to get the new working processes established.

Mr. Dicks also pointed out that, following the review of Depot Services, some works may be carried out by the District Council and thereby reduce the parish councils' liabilities under the Concurrent Functions scheme.

This was noted.

12. **DEMOCRACY GUIDE**

Mr. Harrison referred to the recent publication of the Council's new Democracy Guide and stated that supplies of the booklet could be made available to parish councils upon request.

This was noted.

13. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING(S)**

The Chairman referred to the date of the next Meeting, which was scheduled for 21st June 2005.

The Meeting closed at 7.50 p.m.

Chairman

