

## Lessons from Marlbrook Tip leading to changes - Chief Executive

The Chief Executive of Bromsgrove District Council has said the authority is to make changes to the way it deals with planning applications after learning lessons from the Marlbrook Tip development.

The comments come ahead of tonight's (Tuesday 29) public meeting where the Chief Executive alongside senior officers and members of the authority will discuss ongoing planning issues surrounding the tip, including a draft report on a breach of planning conditions by the Worcestershire Internal Audit service.

The draft report highlights 'weaknesses in the design and/or application' of controls for planning conditions that did not control the development of the site as intended, and makes recommendations on how to prevent a reoccurrence.

**Chief Executive of Bromsgrove District Council Kevin Dicks said:** "We asked for this audit so we could learn the lessons of what went wrong and why. While we await the final publication of the report, we are already making changes as a result of the draft and there is more to be done before the planning situation on the site is resolved.

"There is also an **Overview and Scrutiny** investigation into improving overall planning processes, which is set to report back early next year. However in the meantime we are sharing ongoing progress on this site through public meetings, to ensure residents have any questions answered by senior personnel."

The audit investigation specifically focused on how significantly more material than had been allowed in the planning permission came to be brought onto the site. It lasted three months and had full access to emails and letters, official documents, reports and meeting minutes related to the development.

Its draft report concluded that controls over planning conditions on the 'complex' and 'high risk' site were not strong enough, and that planning committee members were not made sufficiently aware of the resources necessary to make them strong enough, such as installing a weighbridge at the site. In addition, the group set up to monitor the conditions on the site was informal, relied mainly on quarterly reports by the developer and did not produce any actions from its meetings. Furthermore insufficient action was taken after complaints from members of the public, which were not treated as actual 'complaints' and as a result were handled incorrectly.

The draft report recommends that the Council improve information to members, ensure monitoring arrangements are robust with clear accountability, and ensure complaints are handled correctly to aid management decision-making and improve service delivery.

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