



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 7TH DECEMBER 2023

AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

MEMBERS: Councillors H. D. N. Rone-Clarke (Chairman), J. Robinson (Vice-Chairman), S. R. Colella, E. M. S. Gray, C.A. Hotham, H. J. Jones and R. Lambert

AGENDA

1. **To receive apologies for absence and notification of substitutes**
2. **Declarations of Interest**

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.
3. **To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on 21st September 2023 (Pages 5 - 8)**
4. **Statutory Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2023 (Pages 9 - 46)**

A background paper for this item, the polling district review guidance 2023, has been published in a separate Background Papers pack for this meeting.
5. **Local Government Boundary Commission for England preliminary stage Boundary Review for Bromsgrove - Council Size Submission (Pages 47 - 84)**
6. **Changes to postal and proxy voting - briefing note (Pages 85 - 88)**

7. **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 considers to be of so urgent a nature that it cannot wait until the next meeting**

Sue Hanley
Chief Executive (Interim)

Parkside
Market Street
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B61 8DA

28th November 2023

**If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
Jess Bayley-Hill**

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**If you have any questions regarding the agenda or attached papers,
please do not hesitate to contact the officer named above.**

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE

21ST SEPTEMBER 2023, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors H. D. N. Rone-Clarke (Chairman), J. Robinson (Vice-Chairman), S. R. Colella, E. M. S. Gray, C.A. Hotham, H. J. Jones and R. Lambert

Officers: Mr D. Whitney, Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill and Ms M. Bassett

8/23 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES**

None.

9/23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

10/23 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE HELD ON 2ND FEBRUARY 2021, 8TH JULY 2021 AND 24TH JULY 2023**

The minutes of the meetings of the Electoral Matters Committee held on 2nd February 2021, 8th July 2021 and 24th July 2023 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Electoral Matters Committee held on 2nd February 2021, 8th July 2021 and 24th July 2023 be approved as a correct record.

11/23 **STATUTORY REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2023**

The Committee considered the report which set out the proposed communications plan for the statutory review of polling districts and polling places.

In presenting the report, the Electoral Services manager highlighted that there would be a spreadsheet on the consultation webpage which members of the public could review. Background information would also be provided. Details would be published on the website in advance of the consultation period. He invited members to suggest any special interest groups who might be approached.

Given the proposed publication of details prior to the consultation period, Members asked how the webpage would be managed to be clear when comments could be submitted. The Electoral Services Manager confirmed that details on the webpage would state when the consultation

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period began, and there would not be any links to enable comments to be made until then.

A Member asked whether polling districts should be included in the list of issues on which people could comment. The Electoral Services Manager responded that this could be added and was routinely included in stakeholder communications. There would be an interactive map on the webpage which should help those who wished to respond.

A member referred to religious buildings and whether their use caused concern among people of other faiths. The Electoral Services Manager responded that officers asked faith leaders in the local community if they had any concerns about their use. No concerns had been expressed by them about religious institutions or social clubs.

A member queried the use of schools as polling stations due to the potential impact on education. The Electoral Services Manager responded that the law required rooms in schools to be made available if required, but the Elections Team tried to use alternative premises where possible. He gave details of one school where its use was contested, but there were no alternatives and the Team worked with the Head to prepare for elections well in advance.

The use of portacabins as an alternative to schools was discussed and it was noted that these were not ideal, for example, they were not always accessible. Voters had also complained about their use.

A member queried whether feedback was obtained from those working on the elections to inform future arrangements. The Senior Electoral Services Officer reported that Polling Station Inspection staff had been asked for feedback via a checklist at the last election in anticipation of this review. Presiding Officers had also been asked for information about the polling stations, including access for electors and location, and whether they could suggest an alternative. Equalities and Health and Safety Officers visited as many polling stations as they could and completed a separate checklist on these elements. The feedback would be incorporated in the future report to the Committee.

Members queried the timing of the review since the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) would be carrying out a review of the ward boundaries during the next year. It was noted that although the current review of polling districts and polling places was statutory, it would generally be light touch since the arrangements should be in place ready for a General Election. The current LGBCE review of county council electoral divisions was due to be completed next July. This would be followed by consultation on potential new district ward boundaries. The polling districts and places would then need to be reviewed again in detail.

In terms of specific polling stations, the following issues were raised:

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- St Godwald church hall was used for the whole of Aston Fields and Slideslow. It was noted that this had been used as an alternative to the local school. There was a lack of parking and was not in the ward. However, it was noted that it was likely that the school would be used for a General Election.
- Trip hazard at AVB at Stoke Prior village hall.
- The potential for issues arising from planning applications which could impact on polling stations and how these were picked up.
- Currently there were 35 polling stations in the District which were not in the relevant polling district and a member queried how this could be addressed. It was acknowledged that it was best practice to have all polling stations in the polling district, but some polling districts were very small with around 10 electors and it was impractical to do this. A framework would be put together to set out the criteria the Committee would consider to reach a decision when it reviewed feedback about the review. However, given the two forthcoming electoral boundary reviews it would be likely that issues would be examined in more detail when details of the wards and divisions were known.

In terms of communication with councillors, officers confirmed that all members would be invited to let the Committee know of any specific concerns in their ward areas.

RESOLVED that the communications plan for the review in appendix 1 be agreed.

The meeting closed at 6.34 p.m.

Chairman

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Statutory Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2023

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillors May, Leader, and Hotham, Cabinet Member for Finance and Enabling
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Head of Service		Claire Felton
Report Author	Job Title: Electoral Services Manager, Darren Whitney Contact email: darren.whitney@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881650	
Wards Affected		All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		Part of consultation
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		N/A
Non-Key Decision		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		

1. RESOLUTIONS

- 1.1 **that the final proposals in respect of Polling Districts and Polling Places, as contained in Appendix 1 (as amended), be approved; and**
- 1.2 **that the decisions of the Committee in respect of 1.1 above take effect from the date of poll any election/referendum held or on publication of the revised Register of Electors.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on the 24 July 2023 it was agreed that the statutory review would formally commence on 2 October 2023.
- 2.2 The statutory review covers, Polling Districts (a geographical area, which tend not to cross Ward or Parish Boundaries), Polling Place (a building or area where Polling Stations are located) and Polling Stations (the room or area where polling takes place, the decision on location of the polling station is decided by the (Acting) Returning Officer).
- 2.3 The review consists of four stages:
 - Stage 1 – Notification

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- Stage 2 – Consultation
- Stage 3 – Concluding the Review
- Stage 4 – Publication

- 2.4 The (Acting) Returning Officer must make a submission regarding current and any proposed polling stations.
- 2.5 The report sets out the results of the consultation and the findings of the Electoral Services team to the formal review of Polling Districts and Polling Places.
- 2.6 The consultation ran from 2 October to 13 November all submissions and summaries are recorded in the various appendices below. Polling Station Inspectors reviewed the current polling stations within the area at the Local Elections in May. Officers have considered the suitability of these and any other recommendations, including verbal discussions with Elected Members and members of the public. They have also assessed any changes that maybe needed to Polling Districts. Members of the Committee are asked to consider any further proposals and finalise the review.
- 2.7 Communications were sent out to Councillors, stakeholder groups, Parishes and through Council communications including press releases and social media.
- 2.8 A full review document will be published at the end of December giving all the polling districts and places agreed by the committee. This will also record any further and outstanding work required on polling districts and places. Any changes made will be incorporated into the revised electoral register which will be published, if necessary, early in 2024.
- 2.9 Certain people or organisations may appeal to the Electoral Commission to have changes made if they feel the Local Authority hasn't met reasonable expectations of the electorate or taken into account the needs for accessible polling stations.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Subject to the Committee's final decisions, there may be some minor financial implications for the Council which arise directly from this review.

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- 3.2 Depending on the outcome of the review there may be additional costs or savings regarding polling stations that are to be used in future elections.
- 3.3 There are no scheduled local elections in 2024 so costs for Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May will be attributable to Central Government.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Review will be undertaken as required under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and Electoral Administration Act 2013, and in accordance with relevant Electoral Commission Guidance.
- 4.2
 - a) Authority to set Polling District boundaries and to designate polling places rests with the Council (Statutory elements of the Council's Constitution under the Local Government Act 2000). Bromsgrove District Council has delegated full relevant powers to this Electoral Matters Committee.
 - b) Decisions about the situation of Polling Stations within designated Polling Places are for the (Acting) Returning Officer. Arrangements must comply with relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Acts and Regulations, the Equality Act 2010 and the Elections Act 2022.
- 4.3 "Relevant authorities" (such as Bromsgrove District Council) must
 - "a) seek to ensure that all the electors in the Constituency have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances"; and
 - "b) seek to ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, the polling places they are responsible for are accessible to all electors, including those who are disabled and, when considering the designation of a polling place, must have regard to the accessibility needs of disabled persons. If it is necessary to use a place where the access is not ideal, then every reasonable adjustment must be undertaken to provide access for all electors."
- 4.4 The Elections Act 2022 has placed new considerations for Local Authorities in regard to polling places. Key considerations are accessibility and checking voter's ID to ensure polling stations have suitable space to allow polling station staff to check documents and

provide a privacy screen or separate area for confidential conversations.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 This report deals with statutory functions but relates to the strategic purpose of an effective and sustainable council.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 It is preferable that choice of polling place location can help minimise unnecessary additional journeys by motorised vehicles.
- 5.3 Emissions and carbon footprint should be reduced as far as possible.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 Accessibility for members of minority or disadvantaged groups is a key issue in the selection of suitable Polling Stations. The (Acting) Returning Officer will have a general responsibility to provide equipment to support people with a range of disabilities in the polling station.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 Officer time was necessary in dealing with consultation, producing statistics, maps and reporting back to this Committee.

Key Issues

A. Proposed Polling District Boundaries and Polling Places.

- 6.3 Appendix 1 to the report details Polling Districts and associated electoral areas, and the proposals arising from the consultation, together with consultee comments.
- 6.4 Appendix 2 includes all of the submissions made within the consultation.

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B. Issues arising from consultation on recommendations

- 6.5 Polling District COA Cofton Hackett – The old village hall is in disrepair and has accessibility issues. Officers have received requests from electors to move to the new village hall. Officers have visited the new village hall and confirm that it would make a good polling place for the electors of COA.
- 6.6 Polling District ALB Beoley – A resident has written in regarding the use of the village hall (submission BR8). The complaint is not with the use of the hall per se rather that election posters are displayed at the property adjacent to the village hall on polling day.
- 6.7 Polling Districts ASA (Aston Fields North), ASB (Aston Fields South), SSA (Slideslow South) and SSB (Slideslow North) – St Godwald’s Church Hall. Submissions (BR5 and BR9) were received regarding the use of the polling place for two District Wards, both did not want St Godwald’s Church Hall used for the number of electors being sent there.
- 6.8 The Electoral Matters Committee at its meeting on 24 October 2019 had agreed for a trial to be held using St Godwald’s Church Hall for Slideslow Ward electors. This was due to be at the 2020 May elections, however these were cancelled due to Covid and the May 2021 elections were under strict Covid regulations. The first opportunity to use St Godwald’s Church Hall as a polling place for Slideslow was May 2023.
- 6.9 As this was the first time the polling place was used for Slideslow; polling staff handed a short questionnaire to voters at random regarding the polling place and future options for polling. Of those 146 completed 87% were happy with the polling place and over 49% would use it in the future. Over a third (37%) would like to see the polling place return to Finstall First School. The full results can be found in Appendix 3.
- 6.10 Both the submissions to the consultation mentioned parking being an issues and this was reflected in the questionnaire with 27 of those that made comments regarding polling place were related to parking issues.
- 6.11 Although not an official submission on the consultation a Councillor did want to raise concerns regarding the use of schools as polling places and that they had been given an undertaking by the then Returning Officer at the last County Council elections that “following concerns of

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parents, that no Schools or school buildings would be used for any polling station that could disrupt our children's education".

- 6.12 In terms of the use of schools for polling: Government Departments have always advocated, via legislation and guidance, the use of schools as polling stations and this has been further emphasised in recent draft guidance to Returning Officers (ROs) released on 31 October in a section on public buildings that:

"Schools which receive public funding are included in this and should also be made available to ROs free of charge. However, we also appreciate that over recent years schools have been more reluctant to offer rooms to ROs for the purposes of running polls.

If the polling day is known well in advance of the election, schools can decide in liaison with the local authority to set those days as inset days to avoid disruption."

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Any changes agreed must be likely to be sustainable for a reasonable number of years, as frequent changes of Polling Station are not helpful for electors and undermine their knowledge of, and confidence in, electoral systems.
- 7.2 Choice of Polling Place / Polling Station should not give rise to significant grounds of complaint which might put election results at risk of challenge.
- 7.3 The (Acting) Returning Officer must provide adequate levels and standards of staffing to secure proper polling arrangements. The Electoral Commission has changed its guidance in that no more than 2,250 electors should be allocated to a single polling station with at least 1 Presiding Officer and 3 Poll Clerks.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Polling District and Places Spreadsheet

Appendix 2 – Submissions Received

Appendix 3 – Results of questionnaire regarding polling place for SSA and SSB polling districts

Local Government Boundary Commission for England Guidance

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Relevant statutory provisions

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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder		
Head of Service		
Financial Services	Pete Carpenter, Interim Section 151 Officer, Interim Director of Finance and Resources	26 November 2023
Legal Services		

Appendix 1

Bromsgrove Polling District & Polling Place Review 2023

2023 Ward Electorate	Polling District Code	Polling District	Ward	Parish	Parish Ward	Current Polling Place	Polling Staff Comments May 2023	Ward Councillor	Initial Officer and Interim Returning Officer Review Comments
	ALA	Rowney Green & Bordesley	Alvechurch South	Alvechurch	Rowney Green & Bordesley	Rowney Green Peace Memorial Hall	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: No concerns raised. The PO rated the polling place 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: This venue has not yet been visited by the H&S Officer</p>	A Bailes	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for ALA. The Memorial Hall is located centrally within the polling district. The hall is well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.
	ALB	Beoley	Alvechurch South	Beoley		Beoley Village Hall	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: No concerns have been raised by the PO.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: This venue has not yet been visited by the H&S Officer</p>	A Bailes	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for ALB. The Village Hall is located centrally within the polling district. The hall is well known as a polling place by the electorate and works well as a polling station. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.
	ALC	St Laurence	Alvechurch South	Alvechurch	Rowney Green & Bordesley	Alvechurch Baptist Church	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: PO stated that the Baptist Church is easily accessible for those voting in Alvechurch and that the church worked well as a polling place. The PO rated the polling place 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: This venue has not yet been visited by the H&S Officer</p>	A Bailes	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for ALC. Whilst the Baptist Church is not located within the polling district, it's location is in a central position within the Alvechurch Village as a whole and the church is well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.

2249	ALV	Alvechurch Village	Alvechurch Village	Alvechurch	Alvechurch Village	Alvechurch Baptist Church	As above	R Bailes	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for ALV. The Baptist Church is located centrally within the polling district. The church is well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.
	ASA	Aston Fields North	Aston Fields			St Godwalds Church Hall	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: No concerns raised by the PO. The PO rated the polling place 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported that the additional polling stations at the premise resulted in additional pressure on parking and space available at St Godwald's, when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: The H&S Officer also raised concerns about the amount of parking available at the station and the number of polling stations in the big hall when inspecting at the local elections in May.</p>	J Elledge	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for ASA. St Godwald's is located within the polling district and therefore the most suitable polling place for electors within ASA. The issues raised by officers are of concern, and for this reason we will look to move the polling place for the adjoining polling district to ease pressures caused by elector numbers.
2480	ASB	Aston Fields South	Aston Fields			St Godwalds Church Hall	As above	J Elledge	As concerns have been raised officers are actively looking for alternative polling places for this polling district. The Ladybird Public House have ruled themselves out and officers are waiting for a decision from Aston Fields Sports & Social Club.

	AVA	Stoke Prior	Avoncroft	Stoke	Stoke Prior	Stoke Prior Village Hall	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: No concerns raised by the PO. The PO rated the polling place 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: The H&S Officer also raised no concerns about the amount of when inspecting at the local elections in May and recommended continued use of the polling place.</p>	D Nicholl	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for AVA. The Village Hall is located within the polling district. The hall is the best location available within the polling district with the only alternative available being the use of a school.
2813	AVB	Avoncroft	Avoncroft	Stoke	Stoke Prior	Bromsgrove & District Indoor Bowls Club	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The polling station is accessible and in a great location with plenty of parking. The PO rated the polling place 4/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: This station has not yet been visited by the H&S Officer.</p>	D Nicholl	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for AVB. Whilst the bowls club is not located within the polling district, it provides an accessible and convenient polling place, with no suitable alternative identified within the polling district.
	BHA	Hopwood	Barnt Green & Hopwood	Alvechurch	Hopwood	Hopwood Village Hall	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and stated that it had adequate parking.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: The H&S Officer raised some accessibility concerns when inspecting the polling place in May, stating that the village hall was not a wheelchair friendly location.</p>	C Hotham	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for BHA. The Village Hall is located within the polling district. Whilst accessibility issues have been raised, a previous move of the station to the Westmead Hotel was reversed after it was stated that the Village Hall was the preferred community location.
2357	BHB	Barnt Green	Barnt Green & Hopwood	Barnt Green		Friends Meeting House	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and stated that the station was in a convenient location within the centre of the village with good parking and good staff facilities. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.</p>	C Hotham	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for BHB. The Meeting House is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.

	BRA	Belbroughton	Belbroughton & Romsley	Belbroughton	Belbroughton	Belbroughton Recreation Centre	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and stated that the station was in a convenient location with good staff facilities. Rated 5/5 for staff and 4/5 for electors. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no overall concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. However, it was noted that outdoor lighting could be better. Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.	K May/S Nock	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for BRA. Whilst there are some concerns with the availability of outdoor lighting, the Recreation Centre is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate.
	BRB	Fairfield	Belbroughton & Romsley	Belbroughton	Fairfield	Fairfield Village Hall	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.	K May/S Nock	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for BRB. The Village Hall is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate.
	BRC	Bournheath	Belbroughton & Romsley	Bournheath		Bournheath Village Community Centre	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and stated that it was in a nice location within the village. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.	K May/S Nock	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for BRC. The Community Centre is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate.
	BRD	Clent	Belbroughton & Romsley	Clent		Clent Parish Hall	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and commented that it was a great location with good facilities. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.	K May/S Nock	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for BRD. The Parish Hall is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate.

	BRE	Frankley	Belbroughton & Romsley	Frankley		St Kenelm's Church Hall	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.	K May/S Nock	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for BRE. Whilst the Church Hall is not located within the polling district, it is well known as a polling place by the electorate in what is a small and very rural polling district. The polling place is the best available location within the area.
	BRF	Hunnington	Belbroughton & Romsley	Hunnington		St Kenelm's Church Hall	As Above	K May/S Nock	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for BRF. Whilst the Church Hall is not located within the polling district, it is well known as a polling place by the electorate in what is a small and very rural polling district. The polling place is the best available location within the area.
	BRG	Romsley	Belbroughton & Romsley	Romsley		St Kenelm's Church Hall	As above	K May/S Nock	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for BRG. The Church Hall is located within the polling district and is well known as a polling place by the electorate in what is a small and very rural polling district. The polling place is the best available location within the area.
5270	BVA	Bromsgrove Central	Bromsgrove Central			Ryland Centre	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and commented that it was a great location with good facilities. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.	S Robinson	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for BVA. The Ryland Centre is an extremely suitable polling place, conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate.

2344	BVB	Warwick Hall	Bromsgrove Central			Ryland Centre	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.</p>	S Robinson	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for BVB. Whilst the Ryland Centre is not located within the polling district, it is well known as a polling place by the electorate in what is a small polling district created for the purposes of county boundaries. The current polling place is considered to be the best available location within the area.
2101	CAN	Woodrow	Catshill North	Catshill & North Marlbrook	Woodrow	Catshill Methodist Church Hall	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.</p>	B McEldowney	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for CAN. The Methodist Church is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate.
2171	CAS	Barley Meadow	Catshill South	Catshill & North Marlbrook	Barley Meadow	Catshill Social Club	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and commented that the social club was a perfect station in a good location with good parking. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: The H&S Officer raised no concerns when inspecting at the local elections in May and recommended continued use of the venue.</p>	S Webb	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for CAS. Whilst the Social Club is located within polling district and is well known as a polling place by the electorate in a prominent area within Catshill. The current polling place is considered to be the best available location within the area.
	CFA	Charford	Charford			St Andrews Church Hall	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and noted that it was a good venue with good facilities. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.</p>	S Ammar	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for CFA. St Andrew's is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate.

2274	CFB	Manor Court	Charford			St Andrews Church Hall	As above	S Ammar	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for CFB. Whilst St Andrews is located outside of the polling district, it is well known as a polling place by the residents of CFB, which is a small polling district created as a result of the County division boundaries. The current polling place is considered to be the best available location within the area.
	COA	Cofton Hackett	Cofton	Cofton Hackett		Cofton Hackett Village Hall	PO - Some lighting and access issues. PSI - No concerns raised. H&S - challenges with disabled entrance. Some damage to flooring which could present a trip hazard. No outside lighting	A Dale	The old village hall is in disrepair and has accessibility issues. We have received requests from electors to move to the new village hall. Officers to visit new village hall for consideration.
2609	COB	Lickey	Cofton	Lickey & Blackwell	Lickey	Trinity Church (Lickey Parish Centre)	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and commented that the church had excellent facilities, parking and accessibility for electors. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.	A Dale	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for COB. The Trinity Church is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.
2402	DRA	Drakes Cross	Drakes Cross	Wythall	Drakes Cross	Park Hall, Sliver Street	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and commented that Park Hall was easily located and spacious, with good facilities and parking. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: The H&S Officer raised no concerns when inspecting at the local elections in May and recommended continued use of the venue.	S Baxter	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for DRA. The Park Hall is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.

2421	HAA	Hagley East	Hagley East	Hagley	Hagley East	Hagley Community Centre	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and commented that it was a large venue with good facilities. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: The H&S Officer raised no concerns when inspecting at the local elections in May and recommended continued use of the venue.</p>	R Lambert	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for HAA. The Community Centre is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.
	HGB	Hagley West	Hagley West	Hagley	Hagley West	Hagley Community Centre	As above	S Colella	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for HGB. Whilst Hagley Community Centre is located outside of the polling district, it is well known as a polling place by the residents of Hagley. The current polling place is considered to be the best available location within the area.
2955	HGC	Hagley South	Hagley West	Hagley	Hagley South	Hagley Community Centre	As above	S Colella	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for HGC. Whilst Hagley Community Centre is located outside of the polling district, it is well known as a polling place by the residents of Hagley. The current polling place is considered to be the best available location within the area.
1787	HTA	Hill Top	Hill Top			Millfields Social Club	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO commented that this was a good polling place and raised no concerns with the polling station.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.</p>	D Hopkins	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for HTA. Millfields Social Club is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.

2327	HWA	Hollywood	Hollywood	Wythall	Hollywood	Park Hall, Sliver Street	As Per DRA	D Forsythe	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for HWA. Whilst Park Hall is located just outside of the polling district, it is well known as a polling place by the residents of Wythall. The current polling place is considered to be the best available location within the area.
	LHA	Lickey Monument	Lickey Hills	Lickey & Blackwell	Lickey Monument	Trinity Church (Lickey Parish Centre)	As Per COB	B Kumar	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for LHA. Whilst the Trinity Church is located outside of the polling district, it is well known as a polling place by the residents of LHA, which is a small polling district created because of the Parish ward boundaries. The current polling place is considered to be the best available location within the area.
	LHB	Linthurst	Lickey Hills	Lickey & Blackwell	Linthurst	The Wheel, St Catherine's Church	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO commented that this was a good polling place and raised no concerns. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.	B Kumar	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for LHB. The Wheel, St Catherine's is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.
2215	LHC	Shepley	Lickey Hills	Lickey & Blackwell	Shepley	The Wheel, St Catherine's Church	As above	B Kumar	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for LHC. Whilst The Wheel, St Catherine's is located outside of the polling district, it is well known as a polling place by the residents of LHC, which is a small polling district created because of the Parish ward boundaries. The current polling place is considered to be the best available location within the area.

	LWA	Barnsley Hall	Lowes Hill			Changing Rooms at Barnsley Hall	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: The H&S Officer raised concerns about poor facilities for staff and a gravel car park when inspecting at the local elections in May and recommended continued use of the venue.</p>	J Robinson	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for LWA. Whilst there are some concerns about the facilities available at the changing rooms, there has been no suitable alternative found within the area.
	LWB	Lowes Hill	Lowes Hill			All Saints Church Hall	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO commented that this was a good polling place and raised no concerns with the polling station.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.</p>	J Robinson	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for LWB. Whilst The Church Hall is located outside of the polling district, it is well known as a polling place by the residents of LWB, which is a small polling district created because of the Parish ward boundaries. The current polling place is considered to be the best available location within the area.
2510	LWC	Shenstone	Lowes Hill			All Saints Church Hall	As above	J Robinson	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for LWC. The Church Hall is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.
	MAA	Lower Marlbrook	Marlbrook	Catshill & North Marlbrook	Lower Marlbrook	St Luke's Church Centre	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and commented that it was in a good location with good facilities. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.</p>	H Jones	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for MAA, MAB, MAC, MAD. Whilst the Church Centre is located within the MAA polling district, it is well known as a polling place by the residents of Marlbrook, which has many small polling districts created because of the Parish ward and county boundaries. The current polling place is considered to be the best available location within the area.
	MAB	Lickey Grange	Marlbrook	Lickey & Blackwell	Lickey Grange	St Luke's Church Centre	As above	H Jones	As Above
	MAC	Lydiat Ash	Marlbrook			St Luke's Church Centre	As above	H Jones	As Above

2339	MAD	Staple Hill	Marlbrook		St Luke's Church Centre	As above	H Jones	As Above
	NTA	Norton North	Norton		Lickey End Social Club	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.	R Hunter	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for NTA, NTB, NTD. Whilst the Social Club is located within the NTA polling district, it is well known as a polling place by the residents. NTB and NTD are small polling districts created because of the Parish ward boundaries. The current polling place is considered to be the best available location within the area.
	NTB	Crows Mill	Norton		Lickey End Social Club	As above	R Hunter	As Above
	NTC	Norton South	Norton		All Saints Church Hall	As per LWA	R Hunter	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for NTC. Whilst the Church Hall is located within the adjoining LWA polling district, it is well known as a polling place by the residents. The current polling place is considered to be the best available location within the area.
2537	NTD	Norton East	Norton		Lickey End Social Club	As per NTA	R Hunter	As per NTA
	PFA	Dodford with Grafton	Perryfields	Dodford with Grafton	Dodford Village Hall	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and commented that it was in a good location with good facilities. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.	C Taylor	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for PFA. The Village Hall is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.
	PFB	Perryfields South	Perryfields		Girl Guide Hut, Kidderminster Road	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.	C Taylor	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for PFB. Whilst the Guide Hut is located outside of the polling district, it is considered to be the best available location within the area.

1479	PFC	Perryfields North	Perryfields			Portable Building at King George Close	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO commented that conditions at the portable building are poor. Toilet was vandalised overnight and therefore dirty. There was no running water. Door not suitable for access for wheelchairs etc. No easy exit if threat or fire. Entrance to the polling station becomes slippery throughout the day. PO suggests using school instead. Polling Station Inspector Comment: No handrail on ramp so difficult to access polling station. Would not be suitable for a general election. No running water which presents a safety issue. Health & Safety Officer Comment: Ramp unsafe due to instability. Poor facilities for staff. Toilet unsuitable due to vandalism. H&S Officer does not recommend continued use of the portable building.	C Taylor	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for PFC. Whilst a portable building is not considered to be suitable for a polling station, the only other alternative in this location is a school. Officers suggest that this polling district/place is revisited after the electoral ward review.
	RHA	Stoke Heath	Rock Hill	Stoke	Stoke Heath	Bromsgrove & District Indoor Bowls Club	As per AVB	H Rone - Clarke	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for RHA. Whilst the Bowls Club is located outside of the polling district, it has been well received as a polling place by the residents. The current polling place is considered to be the best available location within the area.
	RHB	Rock Hill	Rock Hill			Function Room, Court Leet	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.	H Rone - Clarke	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for RHB. Whilst not located within the polling district, the Function Room has Good facilities for electors and staff with no accessibility issues. Recommend no change as no alternative available within the PD.
2390	RHC	Breakback	Rock Hill			Function Room, Court Leet	As above	H Rone - Clarke	As above
2357	RNA	Rubery North	Rubery North			St Chad's Church	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and commented that it was a large venue with good facilities. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: The H&S Officer raised no concerns when inspecting at the local elections in May and recommended continued use of the venue.	P McDonald	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for RNA. The Church is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.

2512	RSA	Rubery South	Rubery South		Rubery Memorial Club	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: The H&S Officer raised no concerns when inspecting at the local elections in May and recommended continued use of the venue.</p>	E Gray	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for RSA. The Memorial Club is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.
	SAA	Sanders Park	Sanders Park		Girl Guide Hut, Kidderminster Road	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.</p>	M Marshall	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for SAA. The Girl Guide Hut is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.
	SAB	St John's	Sanders Park		Girl Guide Hut, Kidderminster Road	As above	M Marshall	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for SAB. Whilst the Girl Guide Hut is located just outside of the polling district, it is considered to be the best available location within the area.
	SAC	Churchfields	Sanders Park		New Song Community Church	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.</p>	M Marshall	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for SAC. Whilst New Song is located just outside of the polling district, it is considered to be the best available location within the area.
2727	SAD	Spadesbourne	Sanders Park		Function Room, Court Leet	As per RHC	M Marshall	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for SAD. Whilst Court Leet is located just outside of the polling district, it is considered to be the best available location within the area.

	SMA	Sidemoor	Sidemoor			New Song Community Church	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and commented that it was in a great location, with good facilities, accessibility and parking. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.</p>	D Stewart	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for SMA. New Song is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.
2651	SMB	Parkside	Sidemoor			New Song Community Church	As Above	D Stewart	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for SMB. Whilst New Song is located just outside of the polling district, it is considered to be the best available location near to the small polling district, created as a result of county division boundaries.
	SSA	Slideslow South	Slideslow			St Godwalds Church Hall / Finstall First School	As per ASA, ASB	S Evans	Officers recommend no changes be made to either the boundaries or the polling place for SSA. The polling place has recently been moved to St Godwald's in order to move away from Finstall First School for local elections. However, this puts additional pressure on facilities and parking at St Godwald's and therefore it is not recommended St Godwalds be used at a general election for either SSA or SSB
2664	SSB	Slideslow North	Slideslow			St Godwalds Church Hall / Finstall First School	As per ASA, ASB	S Evans	As above

	TAA	Bentley Pauncefoot	Tardebigge	Bentley Pauncefoot		Bentley Village Hall	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.</p>	P Whittaker	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for TAA. Bentley Village Hall is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.
	TAB	Finstall	Tardebigge	Finstall		Finstall Village Hall	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and commented that it was easily accessible with good parking. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: The H&S Officer raised no concerns when inspecting at the local elections in May and recommended continued use of the venue.</p>	P Whittaker	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for TAB. Finstall Village Hall is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.
	TAC	Tutnall & Cobley	Tardebigge	Tutnall & Cobley		Tardebigge Church Hall	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO commented that the Church Hall can be a bit intimidating after dark and that the venue has poor phone signal and no Wi-Fi. The PO also stated that electors are often confused about the location and attend the community Hall instead.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: The H&S Officer commented on the lack of outside lighting when inspecting the polling station at local elections in May.</p>	P Whittaker	Officers recommend that as a result of comments from staff of the returning officer, a move of polling place to the Community Hall is considered. Officers will visit and the Community Hall to assess suitability.
	TAD	Burcot	Tardebigge			Finstall Village Hall	As above	P Whittaker	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for TAD. Whilst the Village Hall is located just outside of the polling district, it is considered to be the best available location within the area.
	TAE	Gambolds	Tardebigge			Finstall Village Hall	As above	P Whittaker	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for TAE. Whilst the Village Hall is located just outside of the polling district, it is considered to be the best available location within the area.

	WTA	Grimes Hill	Wythall East	Wythall	Grimes Hill	Wythall Village Hall	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and commented that the station had good accessibility with good facilities. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: The H&S Officer raised no concerns when inspecting at the local elections in May and recommended continued use of the venue.	J Stanley	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for WTA. Whilst the Village Hall is located outside of the polling district, it is considered to be the best available location in close proximity to the polling district.
	WTB	Majors Green	Wythall East	Wythall	Trueman's Heath	Wake Green AFC Sports Pavilion	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and commented that this was an good, well known location with good parking and elector accessibility. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.	J Stanley	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for WTB. Wake Green Pavilion is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.
	WTC	Trueman's Heath	Wythall East	Wythall	Trueman's Heath	Woodrush Community Hub, Woodrush High School	Presiding Officer Comment: The PO raised no concerns with the polling station and commented that this was an excellent location. Rated 5/5 for staff and 5/5 for electors. Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May. Health and Safety Officer Comment: Not yet visited by the H&S Officer.	J Stanley	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for WTC. Whilst the Hub at Woodrush is located outside of the polling district, it is considered to be the best available location within close proximity to the polling district.
2426	WWA	Headley Heath	Wythall West	Wythall	Headley Heath	Wythall Village Hall	As per WTA	S Peters	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for WWA. Whilst the Village Hall is located outside of the polling district, it is considered to be the best available location within close proximity to the polling district.
	WWB	Wythall Heath	Wythall West	Wythall	Wythall Heath	Wythall Village Hall	As Per WTA	S Peters	Officers recommend that no changes are made to either the boundaries of the polling district, or the polling place for WWB. The Village Hall is conveniently located within the polling district and well known as a polling place by the electorate. No issues of concerns were raised by any of the Returning Officer's staff.

2285	WWC	Walkers Heath	Wythall West	Wythall	Walkers Heath	Broadmeadow Junior School	<p>Presiding Officer Comment: The PO commented that additional signage is needed due to location of station within the school. 3/5 for electors and for staff.</p> <p>Polling Station Inspector Comment: PSI reported no concerns when completing the checklist for the polling place at local elections in May.</p> <p>Health and Safety Officer Comment: The H&S Officer commented on the lack of signage to direct electors through the school grounds when inspecting the polling station at local elections in May.</p>	S Peters	<p>WWC is a very small Polling District on the outskirts of the authority. More signage is needed at the polling station and will be provided at future elections. Whilst the polling place is not considered to be ideal, there are no other suitable venues within the polling district. Therefore no change is recommended by officers.</p>
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Appendix 2 – Submissions Received (redacted)

BR1 4/10/23 – Alvechurch Baptist Church – polling place for ALV, ALC

“I have nothing to add about the polling stations, but thank you for asking. The one in my Ward are accessible by all and there is also a free car park right next to it so I am happy.” District Councillor

BR2 5/10/23 – Hagley Community Centre – polling place for HAA, HGB, HGC

“To close the loop on the statutory review of polling stations I can say that the community centre is ideal for elections as it is central to Hagley and within safe walking distance, easy access to drive to and plenty of free parking. It is well known and has hosted elections for many years now.

This applies to all elections as Hagley is stand alone and clearly defined by greenbelt boundaries and ward boundaries.” District Councillor

BR3 5/10/23 - Friends Meeting House – polling place for BHB

“I am happy to support the continued use of this site as a polling station.” District Councillor

BR4 5/10/23 - Hopwood Village Hall – polling place for BHA

“I am happy to support the continued use of this site as a polling station.” District Councillor

BR5 14/10/23 – St Godwolds Church Hall – polling place for ASA, ASB, SSA, SSB

“This venue is too small for two wards to vote at. The parking is really poor and on a couple of occasions I noticed the car park was full.”

BR6 – 12/10/23 - Fairfield Village Hall – polling place for BRB

“Fairfield Village Hall may be out of the way for those residents living in Wildmoor that do not have transport (majority do have transport). There is, at present, no available venue that can serve as a Polling Station in the Wildmoor area. This could change if the Wildmoor Oak public house reopens.

The furthest direct line distance between dwellings and Fairfield Village Hall, i.e. Barnes Close/Chadwich Grange, is approximately 2 miles.

Fairfield Village Hall is suitable as a Polling Station and is conveniently located for most residents. The Hall is fully accessible, with ample parking, to meet the needs for a polling station, comfortable chairs, suitable tables, has natural and artificial light and is warm.

We do not see any reason why Fairfield Village Hall should not continue as a Polling Station.

Fairfield Village Community Association would prefer no changes to be made to existing arrangements for using Fairfield Village Hall. Many older residents would struggle to get to a polling station that is located elsewhere, e.g. Bournheath Village Community Centre or in Belbroughton.”
Fairfield Community Association

BR7 – 10/11/23 - Tardebigge church hall– polling place for TAC

“This facility is fit for purpose for the task as polling station.”

BR8 – 17/10/23 - Beoley Village Hall – polling place for ALB

I would like to submit the following observation on the suitability of Beoley Village Hall as a Polling Station for future elections.

The entrance gates to the Beoley Village Hall Polling Station faces a brick wall owned by a resident whose property is adjacent to the Village Hall. This resident is a supporter of one particular mainstream political party. As such, this resident, allows his favoured political party to display an exceptionally large electoral candidate banner on this wall at every election. Once in situ, this political banner dominates the entrance to Beoley Village Hall, hitting every elector in the face as they enter and leave the polling station on election day.

Surely this action is contrary to the rules governing the display of political information at a polling station on the day of an election. (It is equivalent to parking a van displaying a candidate banner on its side, just outside the gates of the polling station. Would this be allowed?)

At every election in the last six years, local candidates standing for election have complained to the Chief Executive of Bromsgrove District Council about this political banner, yet it persists.

Consequently, it is time for Bromsgrove District Council to review whether Beoley Village Hall can continue to be a suitable and a non-partisan polling station for the voters of Beoley.

BR9 15/10/23 – St Godwalds Church Hall – polling place for ASA, ASB, SSA, SSB

“Slideslow has historically used Finstall First School as a polling place, however, for May’s local elections, St Godwalds Church was used instead. I would be strongly against using St Godwalds Church again for Slideslow as parking arrangements are not sufficient at the Church, particularly when it is already being used as a polling place for Aston Fields.

Furthermore, the polling place itself is not in the ward, meaning residents had to travel a fair distance to get there to vote which may sadly deter some from voting. Although I recognise that there is a boundary review underway which may change the boundaries, sizes, names and number of councillors per ward, at present I strongly believe that a location within the Slideslow ward should be used for Slideslow voters, particularly when Finstall First School has been used historically which is within the ward.

Moreover, there was some confusion among voters about St Godwalds Church being the polling place in May. One resident in particular showed up at Finstall First School to vote and had to rush over to St Godwalds Church just before 10PM to cast his vote in time. He raised this with me as I was telling on the polling place at the time. Although, the polling place is displayed on the polling card, it appears there was miscommunication about the change to St Godwalds.

I recognise that the initial officer review comments state: “The polling place has recently been moved to St Godwald's in order to move away from Finstall First School for local elections. However, this puts additional pressure on facilities and parking at St Godwald's and therefore it is not recommended St Godwalds be used at a general election for either SSA or SSB”.

I agree that St Godwalds should not be used at a general election for Slideslow, however, I would go further and suggest that it is not used at local elections or PCC elections either. If Slideslow residents are to vote at Finstall First School in general elections and St Godwalds during other elections, this will create a lot of confusion among residents. I believe we should be consistent in our approach and not use St Godwalds Church for Slideslow at all.” District Councillor

BR10 10/11/23 – Catshill Social Club – polling place for CAS

“The polling station at Catshill Social club works well, lots of parking and space inside from recent district elections but complaints I received is that residents have to walk past the methodist church hall (CAN) to get to CAS and vis versa for CAS.” District Councillor

BR11 10/11/23 – Catshill Social Club – polling place for HWA

“I looked at this some months ago and I was happy with the current polling stations' location in Wythall & Hollywood. It could be that the boundary changes, if any, could have an impact but my gut feeling is that they won't.” District Councillor.

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Appendix 3

Slideslow Polling SSA,SSB Survey May 2023

Survey Number (note this on top right of survey paper)

	1. Your Postcode	2. Happy with St Godwald's?	Comments Regarding St Godwald's	3. Future Location	4. Additional Comments
N1	B60 2HN		These locations are so close it is irrelevant		If this survey is an example of what you are spending out money on then it really is time to go !!!
N2	B60 1LE	No	Not enough parking.	Finstall First School	
N3	B60 2SP	No	Very busy, a problem with parking in the evening.	Finstall First School	
N4	B60 2RL	No	Too far to walk and nowhere to park easily.	Finstall First School	Rather than disrupt schooling why not use portacabins which were used a few years ago.
N5	B60 2HQ	No	Was not central to Slideslow ward and local candidate not supported.	Finstall First School	
N6	B60 2HQ	No	The previous location was far more convenient for majority of Slideslow ward.	Finstall First School	
N7	B60 2HR	No	Double yellow lines . Poor parking.	Finstall First School	Easier to park in surrounding roads. No hills to walk up for the elderly.
N8	B60 2SH	No	No parking, easier to park & walk at the back of Finstall First School.	Finstall First School	Porta cabin on the car park at the back of Finstall First School was easy to walk to and park at.
N9	B60 1LE	No	Parking unsafe. Yellow lines around area.	Finstall First School	Health and Safety. Area unsafe. ie Next to road yellow lines.
N10	B60 2SN	No	Parking not easy at the Church Hall	Finstall First School	Finstall First School more convenient.
N11	B60 2SF	No	Car parking very restricted on local roads.	Finstall First School	
N12	B60 2SD	No	No car parking.	Finstall First School	
N13	B60 2RZ	No	No parking available.	Finstall First School	
N14	B60 2HH	No	Parking is a problem.	Finstall First School	
N15	B60 2HH	No	None.	Finstall First School	None.
N16	B60 2RP	No	Lack of parking.	Finstall First School	
N17	B60 2HE	No	Not enough parking.	Finstall First School	
N18	B60 2RD	No	Too far.	Finstall First School	
N19	B60 2RL	No	We have a working daughter, our Granddaughter - So walking to St Godwalds is hard.	Finstall First School	Other than distance (because of limited car parking) it was fine.

Y1	B60 2LL	Yes	Finstall First School	St Godwalds Church Hall	No need to close schools for polling.
Y2	B60 2TJ	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall/Finstall First School	
Y3	B60 2TJ	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall/Finstall First School	
Y4	B60 2TH	Yes	None	St Godwalds Church Hall/Finstall First School	None
Y5	B60 2SD	Yes	No - fine.	St Godwalds Church Hall	Much prefer that St Godwalds is used, as oppose to shutting Finstall School - unnecessary for children to lose a days education.
Y6	B60 2SP	Yes		Finstall First School	
Y7	B60 2SP	Yes	Glad kids not off school. Easy to walk to.	St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y8	B60 2RA	Yes	More parking would be good or overflow elsewhere	Finstall First School	Finstall First School is more walkable with better available parking.
Y9	B60 2HN	Yes		Finstall First School	
Y10	B60 2HP	Yes	Organised	Finstall First School	
Y11	B60 2DW	Yes	Car parking problem.	Finstall First School	
Y12	B60 2TQ	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y13	B60 2SL	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y14	B60 2RZ	Yes		Ryland Centre	
Y15	B60 2TG	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	A lot better at St Godwalds Church Hall as it avoids the school (Finstall First) having to be closed. It is a not much further and happy to travel.
Y16	B60 2HE	Yes	Parking not too good.	Finstall First School	
Y17	B60 2DP	Yes	Parking might become an issue	Finstall First School	Don't feel strongly between the 2 locations but parking slightly easier in Carnforth Road (Finstall First School).
Y18	B60 2SN	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y19	B60 2SN	Yes	Not as convenient, but acceptable.	Finstall First School	
Y20	B60 2TE	Yes		Finstall First School	
Y21	B60 2HD	Yes	This polling station is further away from where we live.	Finstall First School	Finstall First School would be a lot nearer for us to walk.
Y22	B60 2HU	Yes	Difficult to park!	Finstall First School	

Y23	B60 2DW	Yes	Just out of walking distance - could be difficult to park.	St Godwalds Church Hall/Finstall First School	Depending on health - it might be better for me to have a postal vote next time.
Y24	B60 2DP	Yes	It's very accessible for residents in and around Aston Fields.	St Godwalds Church Hall	No, but see above.
Y25	B60 2RX	Yes	No.	St Godwalds Church Hall	No.
Y26	B60 1LE	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y27	B60 1LE	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y28	B60 2RH	Yes	Very friendly and I could take my Dog.	Finstall First School	Bit difficult to park when busy.
Y29	B60 2DP	Yes	Different to last time. Limited parking.	Finstall First School	
Y30	B60 2SL	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y31	B60 2TS	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y32	B60 2TS	Yes		Finstall First School	
Y33	B60 2TQ	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y34	B60 2RL	Yes		Finstall First School	Finstall First doesn't have to be closed if using St Godwalds - ie no wasted day for childcare.
Y35	B60 2TP	Yes	I'd prefer this than school being affected.	St Godwalds Church Hall	PLEASE don't close the schools for polling. Covid and strikes is already affecting the kids.
Y36	B60 2TR	Yes	No parking spaces (assume all used by Election Officers). Had to park in side road.	Another location. Somewhere with better parking	
Y37	B60 2RU	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	Totally agree with the use of the Church Hall rather than school!
Y38	B60 2HR	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	Keep all schools open. They have missed enough!
Y39	B60 2HJ	Yes	numbered tables so people know which table to go to before entering the hall.	St Godwalds Church Hall	I have children at the school, it is unfair to close school to students for polling particularly after the disruption of Covid.
Y40	B60 2SH	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall/Finstall First School	
Y41	B60 2SH	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y42	B60 2DW	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y43	B60 2HJ	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	Good idea, saves closing the school for the day.
Y44	B60 2TE	Yes	Prefer school nr The Oakalls (but understand children should not lose any more days learning).	Finstall First School	
Y45	B60 2HR	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	

Y46	B60 2HS	Yes		Finstall First School	
Y47	B60 2HH	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	Well organised.
Y48	B60 2HH	Yes	Bigger car park required.	St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y49	B60 2DR	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y50	B60 2HP	Yes		Finstall First School	
Y51	B60 2SP	Yes		Finstall First School	
Y52	B60 2DN	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y53	B60 2HP	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall/Finstall First School	Using Finstall First School disrupts the schooling so the Church hall is preferable.
Y54	B60 2TJ	Yes	Very small entrance but apart from that well laid out & process very smooth and easy.	Finstall First School	None
Y55	B60 2SH	Yes	Better than closing a school.	St Godwalds Church Hall	Helpful volunteers.
Y56	B60 2HJ	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y57	B60 2DW	Yes	Much better place. Children need to be at school. Not closing it for elections.	St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y58	B60 2HF	Yes	Very efficient - slight issues with parking but that would be so everywhere.	St Godwalds Church Hall	I do not think that schools should be closed for polling when there is a viable alternative.
Y59	B60 2TA	Yes	Parking can be an issue	Finstall First School	
Y60	B60 2SH	Yes	Parking a problem at busy times . Shoppers car park not always available	Finstall First School	Situated on a very busy road, not ideal.
Y61	B60 2TA	Yes	park was a potential problem for some, as the car park is small. The surrounding streets were unusually busy, though	St Godwalds Church Hall	disruption than they have already experienced, so moving it to St Godwalds Church is a real positive as far as I am concerned.
Y62	B60 2TJ	Yes	This is a great option as it doesn't impact on the school. Children shouldn't be impacted by elections negatively.	St Godwalds Church Hall	you also ensure you poll the families of Finstall First School as some may be postal votes, but still deserve a say.
Y63	B60 2RP	Yes	Although I am not disabled I noticed the car park and entrance were not very wheelchair friendly.	Finstall First School	The First School is more accessible for disabled people.
Y64	B60 2HQ	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	Either suitable locations.
Y65	B60 2HQ	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y66	B60 2HH	Yes	OK.	St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y67	B60 2HS	Yes		Finstall First School	A good choice of venue due to teacher strikes at Finstall.
Y68	B60 2SQ	Yes		Finstall First School	

Y69	B60 2RD	Yes	Good location and keeps Fininstall First School open.	St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y70	B60 2TH	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y71	B60 2HD	Yes		Either	
Y72	B60 2HD	Yes	None.	St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y73	B60 2HN	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall/Fininstall First School	
Y74	B60 2HJ	Yes	Friendly welcome.	St Godwalds Church Hall	No.
Y75	B60 2SQ	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y76	B60 2RS	Yes	Excellent venue.	St Godwalds Church Hall	Thanks to all who help out - very well organised.
Y77	B60 2RZ	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y78	B60 2RZ	Yes		Fininstall First School	
Y79	B60 2RD	Yes	Parking is difficult	Fininstall Hall	
Y80	B60 2SA	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	No issues. Everyone helpful and informative
Y81	B60 2TA	Yes	Convenient and well organised.	St Godwalds Church Hall	No thankyou.
Y82	B60 2RN	Yes		Either	No preference.
Y83	B60 2RN	Yes		Fininstall First School	
Y84	B60 2RL	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y85	B60 2SN	Yes		Fininstall First School	Not at Fininstall as disrupts school education.
Y86	B60 2SN	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y87	B60 2TG	Yes	Friendly helpers. Do NOT allow dogs.	Either	
Y88	B60 2TG	Yes		Either	
Y89	B60 2TE	Yes		Either	
Y90	B60 2SA	Yes	Helpful staff.	St Godwalds Church Hall	Nothing to mention.
Y91	B60 2SA	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	

Y92	B60 2SA	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y93	B60 2RS	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y94	B60 2TA	Yes	Better than using schools and closing them.	St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y95	B60 2RZ	Yes		Either	
Y96	B60 2TA	Yes		Finstall First School	
Y97	B60 2SA	Yes	Slightly further to walk to than Finstall First School.	Finstall First School	
Y98	B60 2TP	Yes		Finstall First School	Easier to park at Finstall School.
Y99	B60 2SA	Yes	None.	St Godwalds Church Hall	None.
Y100	B60 2TQ	Yes	All good.	St Godwalds Church Hall	None.
Y101	B60 2TQ	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y102	B60 2RX	Yes	Limited parking but easy walking distance.	St Godwalds Church Hall	Some seating for people who may need a little rest if they have walked.
Y103	B60 2 TJ	Yes		Either	
Y104	B60 2TR	Yes	N/A	St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y105	B60 2RX	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y106	B60 2SN	Yes	N/A	St Godwalds Church Hall	N/A
Y107	B60 2SN	Yes	Good location.	St Godwalds Church Hall	None
Y108	B60 2RH	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y109	B60 2RG	Yes	Happy with this polling station.	St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y110	B60 2SS	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y111	B60 2SF	Yes	Slight lack of parking facilities.	St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y112	B60 2SF	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y113	B60 2HF	Yes	Parking facilities poor.	Finstall First School	Nearer to address better parking for car users.
Y114	B60 2SQ	Yes		Finstall First School	

Y115	B60 2SD	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y116	B60 2RJ	Yes		Either	
Y117	B60 2HQ	Yes			
Y118	B60 2DN	Yes		Finstall First School	
Y119	B60 2SB	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y120	B60 2DN	Yes		Finstall First School	Don't really mind, but Finstall school is better for me.
Y121	B60 2RS	Yes	Much better than the School.	St Godwalds Church Hall/Another location	A pub please.
Y122	B60 2TH	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y123	B60 2RQ	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y124	B60 2TP	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y125	B60 2HQ	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	Schools should not be used as polling stations. Children's education is more important. Other venues are perfectly adequate.
Y126	B60 2HQ	Yes		St Godwalds Church Hall	
Y127	B60 2HQ	Yes	No all fine.	Finstall First School	Finstall School near to where we live.

127 Happy
18 Not Happy
1 No answer

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Electoral Matters Committee 7 December 2023

**Local Government Boundary Commission for England preliminary stage
Boundary Review for Bromsgrove – Council Size Submission**

Relevant Portfolio Holder		Councillors May, Leader, and Hotham, Cabinet Member for Finance and Enabling
Portfolio Holder Consulted		Yes
Relevant Head of Service		Claire Felton
Report Author	Job Title: Electoral Services Manager, Darren Whitney Contact email: darren.whitney@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881650	
Wards Affected		All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted		Not Applicable
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)		All
Non-Key Decision		
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Electoral Matters Committee RECOMMEND that:-

- 1) Council put forward the Council Size Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England including any amendments made.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) last reviewed Bromsgrove in 2012/13.
- 2.2 Each year, the LGBCE calculates the level of electoral inequality arising in each local authority area to establish whether there is a need for an electoral review.

Under the criteria adopted by the LGBCE, either of the following conditions are considered to warrant a review if the imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period:

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- Any local authority with an electoral division or ward that has an electoral variance of 30% or over. This means a ward having 30% more or fewer electors per councillor than is average for the council as a whole.
- Any local authority where more than 30% of wards have an electoral variance of over 10% from the average for that authority.

Based on electoral data, in the Bromsgrove District Area:

- Eight of the 30 (27%) electoral wards have a variance of greater than 10%
- One of the electoral wards has a variance of over 30%

Accordingly, the LGBCE decided to commence a review of the Bromsgrove District Council area.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None at this stage other than officer time, the cost of the review is borne by the LGBCE. Any future changes in council size will have a direct impact on the member allowance budget in 2024. The current (2023/24) basic allowance is £4,732 per annum.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The LGBCE is a statutory body accountable to Parliament that conducts reviews of local authority electoral arrangements in England. Its statutory obligations are set out in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
- 4.2 One of the objectives of the LGBCE is to provide electoral arrangements for English principal local authorities that are fair and deliver electoral equality for voters.

5. STRATEGIC PURPOSES - IMPLICATIONS

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 As the review will affect the number of Councillors in the future it will have a bearing on all Strategic Purposes. The results of the review will not be implemented until 2027.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

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Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.1 No direct impact at this stage.

Operational Implications

6.2 The LGBCE will seek to deliver electoral equality for voters in local elections.

6.3 The electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for the whole local authority. These are:

- The total number of councillors to be elected to the council: council size.
- The names, number and boundaries of wards.
- The number of councillors to be elected from each ward.

This report only relates to the first bullet point of Council size, the others will be considered later on in the process and the Council will have the opportunity to feed into the process.

6.4 The LGBCE will come to a conclusion on council size after hearing the Council's views during the preliminary phase.

6.5 The draft Council Size Submission is included at Appendix 1 for which the contextual information is completed. Committee Members are invited to agree a Council size and make any amendments they see fit before recommending the Submission to Council.

6.6 In March 2024 the LGBCE will decide on the Council size and will then start a consultation regarding warding patterns.

6.7 The LGBCE will publish draft recommendations regarding warding patterns in October 2024. A consultation on the draft recommendations will run from October 2024 to January 2025 and final recommendations will be made in March 2025.

6.8 The legal order will be made in summer 2025 and be implemented at the 2027 elections.

6.9 Other Districts in Worcestershire have recently completed a review and Worcestershire County Council is currently undergoing one.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

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- 7.1 The LGBCE makes the decision on council size and any delay in agreeing the Council size document may result in the LGBCE not taking the Council's submission into account.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1: Draft Council Size Submission

Background papers:

LGBCE – Electoral Review of Bromsgrove

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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder		
Lead Director / Head of Service		
Financial Services		
Legal Services		

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Council Size Submission:

Bromsgrove District Council

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How to Make a Submission

It is recommended that submissions on future governance arrangements and council size follow the guidance provided and use the format below as a template. Submissions should be treated as an opportunity to focus on the future needs of the council and not simply describe the current arrangements. **Submissions should also demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been considered in drawing up the proposal and why you have discounted them.**

The template allows respondents to enter comments directly under each heading. It is not recommended that responses be unduly long; as a guide, it is anticipated that a 15 to 20-page document using this template should suffice. Individual section length may vary depending on the issues to be explained. Where internal documents are referred to URLs should be provided, rather than the document itself. It is also recommended that a table is included that highlights the key paragraphs for the Commission's attention.

'Good' submissions, i.e. those that are considered to be most robust and persuasive, combine the following *key success components* (as set out in the guidance that accompanies this template):

- Clarity on objectives
- A straightforward and evidence-led style
- An understanding of local place and communities
- An understanding of councillors' roles and responsibilities

About You

The respondent should use this space to provide the Commission with a little detail about who is making the submission, whether it is the full Council, Officers on behalf of the Council, a political party or group, a resident group, or an individual.

Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

Please explain the authority's reasons for requesting this electoral review; it is useful for the Commission to have context. *NB/ If the Commission has identified the authority for review under one of its published criteria, then you are not required to answer this question.*

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

The Context for your proposal

Your submission gives you the opportunity to examine how you wish to organise and run the council for the next 15 - 20 years. **The consideration of future governance arrangements and council size should be set in the wider local and national policy context.** The Commission expects you to challenge your current arrangements and

determine the most appropriate arrangements going forward. In providing context for your submission below, please demonstrate that you have considered the following issues.

- When did your Council last change/reorganise its internal governance arrangements and what impact on effectiveness did that activity have?
- To what extent has transference of strategic and/or service functions impacted on the effectiveness of service delivery and the ability of the Council to focus on its remaining functions?
- Have any governance or capacity issues been raised by any Inspectorate or similar?
- What influence will local and national policy trends likely have on the Council as an institution?
- What impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

Previous Electoral Review & Changes

The Council's Size was last changed in the Bromsgrove (Electoral Changes) Order 2014, when the number of councils was reduced from 39 to 31 councillors.

In 2015, Bromsgrove District Council conducted a community governance review which focused on Hagley and Clent parish councils and their boundaries. As a result of this review, The Bromsgrove District Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance No.1) Order 2016 was made in February 2016. The order amended the boundaries of both existing parishes to ensure effective community governance which reflected the identities and interest of the community.

Whilst there have been no other changes to governance arrangements since the 2014 order, several undertakings have been made in more recent years to evaluate the effectiveness of the Council.

Corporate Peer Challenge

In December 2022, Bromsgrove District Council commissioned a corporate peer challenge with a request for specific focus on the governance and culture theme, in order to provide an understanding of improvement requirements around governance systems and decision making.

The feedback report¹ detailed that the council has successfully established collaborative partnerships with Redditch Borough Council while maintaining their political sovereignty. The peer team acknowledged that the council take pride in their dedicated and long-serving staff who feel a deep sense of belonging to the organisation. They noted that while the council has a clear vision and priorities, there's room for enhancing communication and implementing a robust performance management framework to better align efforts with their objectives.

The peer team noted that there's a commitment to economic regeneration, and while there may be capacity challenges at senior levels and in project management, these can be addressed positively. It was noted that Elected Members are highly motivated and focused

¹ [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Final Report 2021 \(bromsgrove.gov.uk\)](https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/~/media/2022/12/LGA-Corporate-Peer-Challenge-Final-Report-2021.pdf)

on improving the quality of life for residents as well as being actively engaged in the council's mission.

The team identified that strong, trusting partner relationships exist at the senior levels through the Local Strategic Partnership, which is dedicated to improving local services and making a positive difference. They also stated that the Council has effectively navigated the challenges of the pandemic and is now well-positioned to adapt and thrive. This includes a potential post-pandemic reset of working arrangements to align with their priorities effectively.

Overall, findings show that residents have a positive perception of the Council and its services. However, there's an opportunity for even more effective communication and engagement to ensure that members, staff, and residents are well-informed about the council's activities and their positive impact.

As a result of the recommendations made by the peer team in their final report, the Council created a series of action plans in response to each recommendation made, and noted that work to address some of the issues raised had already begun since the review had been conducted. Considering the review, the Council revisited its current priorities to ensure that the council's mission and its resources are correctly aligned².

Council Review of Governance arrangements

In May 2023, a motion was approved at the Annual Council meeting to review the council's governance system. The Overview and Scrutiny Board established a Governance Systems Task Group for this purpose. The task group aimed to assess available governance options for Bromsgrove District Council, considering cost implications and Member and Officer time commitments. Its objectives included ensuring effective decision-making, promoting cross-party engagement, fostering inclusive policy development and decision-making, and embedding principles of equality, inclusiveness, efficiency, and accountability within the constitution. The task group sought to make recommendations to the Council for the most suitable governance model that aligns with these objectives. The Local Government Association (LGA) arranged for support from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to assist the task group.

The Task Group began its work in July 2023, setting objectives to explore governance options, assess costs, and ensure inclusive and accountable decision-making. They held meetings throughout August, conducted interviews with experts and considered various models.

The following factors influenced the evaluation of governance systems and the recommendations for the most suitable model for the council:

- No Universal Best Practice: There's no single best governance model for local government; it should be tailored to each Council's needs.
- Local Context Matters: What works in one Council might not in another, highlighting the need to consider local circumstances.

² [Agenda item - Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan - Orb](#)

- **Strengths and Weaknesses:** The review identified strengths (cross-party engagement, inclusiveness) and weaknesses (limited access to information, trust issues) in the current system.
- **Design Principles:** The report established design principles, including timely information, skills-based roles, consensus, resident-centred decisions, assurance, trust, and cost-neutrality.
- **Comparison with Governance Models:** The Leader and Cabinet model and the Committee system were assessed against the above design principles.
- **Active Participation of Backbench Members:** Considerations included Cabinet Advisory Panels in the current system and increased Committee meetings in the Committee system.

In its final report in September 2023, the Task Group recommended that the Council does not consider a move to the committee system, but rather adopts a hybrid Leader and Cabinet Model moving forward. It is believed that this model incorporates various features and considerations to ensure effective governance.

Proposed Hybrid Leader and Cabinet Model – Features:

Amendments to the Council's Constitution: The proposed model would include changes to the council's constitution. One notable change would require opposition members to be appointed as Chairmen of the Audit, Standards, and Governance Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Board. This change aims to address concerns that the current arrangement relies on goodwill and complies with national best practices.

Working Protocols: The introduction of working protocols that detail expectations for cross-party working to maintain a collegiate approach to governance. These protocols would help allocate Chairmen of Committees that reflect the council's composition at the time.

Cabinet Advisory Panels: The introduction of Cabinet Advisory Panels, consisting of both Cabinet and backbench councillors. These panels would be responsible for reviewing and contributing to the development of critical strategies and policies. They would be chaired by relevant Portfolio Holders, offering backbench councillors more opportunities to influence decision-making.

Improving Communication: Steps to enhance communication with members, including inclusive Member-led work programming in the Overview and Scrutiny process, timely access to reports, and continued sharing of information through political group meetings. Additionally, raising awareness of resources available to members through ongoing training.

Memorandum of Understanding: The proposal to establish a Memorandum of Understanding between all political group leaders, aiming to maintain the working arrangements for at least the next four years, while allowing flexibility for the council to determine alternative working arrangements if needed.

It is noted in the report that these changes will lead to an increase in the number of meetings held, due to the introduction of Cabinet Advisory Panels. Further details have been included where relevant in the strategic leadership and accountability sections of this document.

The final report of the Overview & Scrutiny Board Governance Systems Task group is also available for more information³.

Consultation with Current Members

Officers created a councillor workload survey to get a thorough picture of views on the council's current size and effectiveness, as well as the way in which councillors deal with their casework, and how they feel this has changed in recent years. The survey was conducted electronically in early November 2023 and received a response rate of 30%. A summary overview of relevant responses can be found in Appendix 1.

To summarise:

- Councillors generally felt that their overall workload was about right.
- Most Councillors felt that the current council size is about right.
- Councillors noted that the way in which they communicate with residents has changed in more recent years. With more casework arising via social media and a higher expectation placed on councillors to respond quicker. It was noted that issues are also still raised from residents via other channels such as email and telephone.
- It was noted that councillor face more complex issues from residents in more recent years, with factors such as the cost-of-living crisis attributed to this.

Comparison with Neighbouring Authorities

Whilst it is acknowledged that each council is different, in order to assist with initial discussions on a proposed council size, a comparison against CIPFA nearest neighbours, as well as the other authorities within the Worcestershire County was conducted.

Bromsgrove	31	74,914	2,417
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Nearest Neighbours

Local Authority	Council Size	Electorate	Electors per Councillor
Stroud	51	96,307	1,888
Litchfield	47	82,021	1,745
Maldon	31	50,839	1,640
South Staffs	49	85,031	1,735
Harborough	34	72,831	2,142
Tewkesbury	38	71,171	1,873

³<https://moderngovwebpublic.bromsgrove.gov.uk/documents/s54984/Governance%20Systems%20Task%20Group%20-%20report.pdf>

Worcestershire County

Local Authority	Council Size	Electorate	Electors per Councillor
Redditch	29 (reducing to 27)	63,666	2,195 (2,358)
Worcester	35	76,340	2,181
Malvern Hills	31	62,233	2,008
Wychavon	43	102,872	2,392
Wyre Forest	33	72,234	2,340

Whilst considering neighbouring council sizes, it was noted that Bromsgrove District Council currently has the highest electoral ratio when considering both neighbouring authorities within the county and 'nearest neighbours'.

As described above, the Council has given significant consideration to future governance arrangements in recent years, including a critical evaluation of its current arrangements. The Council has a clear vision as to the proposed model of governance moving forward and is currently in the process of implementing any necessary changes, including recommendations identified during the corporate peer challenge. The consultation with members provided an insight into the ways in which members operate within the community and the impact that this has on the council's function. After such consideration, it is felt that the Council is in a good position to suggest an appropriate council size moving forward.

Local Authority Profile

Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting, in particular the local geography, demographics and community characteristics. This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description should cover all of the following:

- Brief outline of area - are there any notable geographic constraints for example that may affect the review?
- Rural or urban - what are the characteristics of the authority?
- Demographic pressures - such as distinctive age profiles, migrant or transient populations, is there any large growth anticipated?
- Community characteristics – is there presence of "hidden" or otherwise complex deprivation?
- Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

Further to providing a description, the Commission will be looking for a submission that demonstrates an understanding of place and communities by putting forth arguments on council size based upon local evidence and insight. For example, how does local geography, demographics and community characteristics impact on councillor casework, workload and community engagement?

Geography

Bromsgrove District Council is located within the West Midlands Region, situated 14 miles from the centre of Birmingham. It is a non-metropolitan district council operating as part of a 2-tier administrative structure, with Worcestershire County Council responsible for social services, education, and highways.

The 84 square mile district is predominantly rural, with approximately 90% of the land designated as Green Belt. There are population clusters including Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Catshill, Hagley, Rubery and Wythall, with the town of Bromsgrove being the main centre of population.

Demography

Bromsgrove District has 99,200 residents. Population Projections for Bromsgrove⁴

Year	2024	2025	2026	2027	2030	2033
Bromsgrove	104,115	104,937	105,714	106,490	108,695	110,667

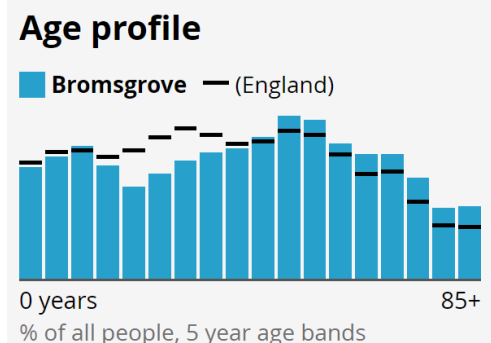
As per the 2018 based ONS statistics, Bromsgrove is projected to have an increase to its population of 6,552 between the years 2024 – 2033.

There are 45,000 homes and businesses in the district. Many residents commute to Birmingham, and the district has the highest % of self-employed and business start-ups in England.

The district has a higher percentage of economically active residents at 57.2% in employment (compared to 56.5% across the West Midlands) as well as a higher percentage of retired residents at 27.1% (compared to 22.1% across the West Midlands). Workers are employed in a variety of industries, with wholesale & retail trade, human health & social work activities and education the top three industries.

According to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), Bromsgrove Raked at 271 of the 317 local authorities in England.⁵ Whilst the authority does have higher median income levels, it also has isolated areas of deprivation.

According to 2021 Census data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS)⁶ The district has an above-average number of over 50s, when compared against the national averages.



Approximately 17.1% of the population are under 15 and 23% are over 65 years old.

⁴<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/dataset/localauthoritiesinenglandtable2>

⁵ [English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019)

⁶ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/customprofiles/build/>

Issues such as an ageing population, a lack of affordable housing and developing the local economy all impact on the district.

In January 2017, Bromsgrove District Council adopted its [Bromsgrove District Plan](#) which sets out the Council’s vision and strategy for the area until 2023 and provides the basis for decisions on planning application. The plan sets out the Council’s economic, social and environmental characteristics as well as identifying 14 key challenges which the district faces. These include regeneration of the Town Centre, Maintaining the vitality of smaller villages attracting inward investment. It also identifies the need to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the community, in particular the provision of affordable housing and housing suitable for the elderly.

Bromsgrove currently has the following Neighbourhood Plans in place:

- Alvechurch Parish
- Lickey & Blackwell and Cofton Hackett
- Catshill & North Marlbrook Parish

Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role.

These are categorised as: **Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulatory and Partnerships), and Community Leadership**. Submissions should address each of these in turn and provide supporting evidence. Prompts in the boxes below should help shape responses.

Strategic Leadership

Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority. Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		
<p>Governance Model</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i> ➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i> ➤ <i>If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.</i> ➤ <i>By what process does the council aim to formulate strategic and operational policies? How will members in executive, executive support and/or scrutiny positions be involved? What particular demands will this make of them?</i> ➤ <i>Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep the current structure does not in itself, provide an</i>

		<p><i>explanation of why that structure best meets the needs of the council and your communities.</i></p>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p><u>Governance Model:</u></p> <p>Bromsgrove District Council completed a scrutiny Task Group review of governance structures in 2023. The review was launched after the Council elections held in May 2023 which resulted in a position of No Overall Control. A copy of the report and minutes from the extraordinary Council meeting held on 20th September 2023, when this report was considered, have been provided separately for information.</p> <p>This was a comprehensive review of the available governance structures, which was designed to enable the Councillors to determine which governance model was most suitable for Bromsgrove District Council and the communities the authority serves moving forwards. Evidence was obtained from a Deputy Leader of a Council that operates a Committee system as well as through interviews with a governance expert from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS). The Task Group also received impartial advice from a representative of the CfGS throughout the course of the review.</p> <p>As a result of this review and based on the evidence gathered, Members concluded that retaining the Leader and Cabinet model of decision-making would be the most appropriate governance option for Bromsgrove District Council moving forward. However, it was agreed that the Leader and Cabinet model should be retained in a hybrid form. Under this hybrid model, there will continue to be a Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Board, with a new Cabinet Advisory Panel to be introduced to enable greater participation by backbench Councillors in terms of influencing the decision making and policy development process. Members were also keen to embed the more collegiate, cross-party methods of working that have emerged since the elections held in May 2023 and to ensure that there would be a requirement for opposition Members to be appointed to key roles, such as that of Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, in line with best practice.</p> <p>A number of changes will need to be made to the Council's constitution and working practices moving forward in order to implement the Task Group's proposals. Currently, action is being undertaken to</p>

review the Council's constitution and it is envisaged that these changes will be put in place in time for implementation in the 2024/25 municipal year and subsequent years.

Cabinet – number of Members

The number of Members appointed to the Cabinet is determined by the Leader of the Council. In recent years, the Leader has tended to appoint either 6 or 7 Councillors to Cabinet; at the time of writing there are 7 Members on the Cabinet. It is envisaged that a similar number of Members would continue to be appointed to the Cabinet in future.

The current membership of the Cabinet comprises representatives of two different political groups; the Conservative group and the 2023 Independents group. The Leader of the Council is the leader of the Conservative group, which is the largest group at the Council. The Deputy Leader of the Council is the leader of the 2023 Independents group. All of the members on the Cabinet represent particular portfolios, although they do not have individual decision-making powers. Instead, decisions are taken collectively by the Cabinet. This arrangement is something that the Councillors would be keen to continue moving forward to ensure that a collegiate approach to decision making remains in place in future, in line with the Governance Systems Task Group's findings.

Policy Development

The Council publishes a Cabinet Work Programme, which is the Council's Forward Plan. The Council aims to publish both key and non-key decisions on the Cabinet Work Programme and to provide more than 28 days' notice of these items wherever possible.

Following on from the Governance Systems Task Group review in August 2023, a Cabinet Advisory Panel is due to be established at the Council. The final arrangements for the operation of this Advisory Panel remain to be confirmed at the time of writing. However, it is envisaged that the Cabinet Advisory Panel, to be chaired by a member of the Cabinet, will consider key policies and strategic issues some time in advance of decisions being taken by the Cabinet on those subjects. The membership of the Advisory

		<p>Panel will not be limited to Cabinet members only. Instead, the aim is to open up membership to non-executive Councillors to provide backbench Members with greater opportunities to influence the policy development and decision-making process. Suggestions put forward at meetings of the Cabinet Advisory Panel will be taken on board by report authors when drafting their reports.</p> <p>The Governance Systems Task Group recognised the value of the Overview and Scrutiny process at Bromsgrove District Council. The proposal was made for there to be a scrutiny prioritisation session at the start of the municipal year, whereby scrutiny Members could identify key policies and strategic issues that they feel should be subject to scrutiny that year. This will be incorporated into the Council's calendar of meetings and Member development process from the 2024/25 municipal year onwards.</p> <p>In addition, the Overview and Scrutiny Board receives a copy of the Cabinet Work Programme for consideration at every meeting. Members can and do identify items from the work programme which they feel would benefit from pre-decision scrutiny and these items are then scheduled for consideration at subsequent meetings of the Board. Any recommendations arising from pre-scrutiny of reports are reported for the consideration of the Cabinet. As Overview and Scrutiny is a Member-led process, the Councillors on the Overview and Scrutiny Board determine which items they wish to scrutinise.</p> <p>It has been recognised by elected Members that there will be a need to ensure that the Cabinet Advisory Panel and Overview and Scrutiny Board do not duplicate work. As part of the actions that are being taken following agreement of the Governance Systems Task Group's recommendations, this will be reviewed further.</p>
Portfolios	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i> ➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i> ➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i> ➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i>
	Analysis	<p><u>Number of Portfolio Holders</u></p> <p>It is likely that there will continue to be 7 Members appointed to the Cabinet in future years. The exact number is determined by the Leader of the Council.</p>

Role of a Portfolio Holder

At Bromsgrove District Council, Portfolio Holders do not have individual decision-making powers. Instead, decisions are taken collectively by the Cabinet.

At the Council, Portfolio Holders do the following:

- Act as spokespersons for the services/projects within the remit of their portfolios. This includes being consulted on and providing quotes for press releases/in response to press enquiries.
- They are consulted on the content of draft reports within their remits.
- Meet with senior officers to discuss actions/services within their remit.
- Present reports at Cabinet for items within their remit.
- Help to present reports to Overview and Scrutiny meetings for items within their remit.
- Attend Overview and Scrutiny Board / Finance and Budget Working Group (on budget matters) / Scrutiny Task Group meetings when invited to provide answers to questions from scrutiny Members.
- Present Annual Portfolio Holder reports at meetings of full Council.
- Attend Cabinet Surgeries, which are held in private and at which Portfolio Holders answer questions from other Members about areas within their remits. (This is a new arrangement introduced during the 2023/24 municipal year).
- Attend meetings of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee to answer questions from Members where invited to do so. (The lead Cabinet Member for the budget attends every meeting of the Committee to answer questions and help present reports, although is not permitted to be a Member of the Committee).
- Represents the Council on external organisations where appointed to outside bodies in an ex officio capacity.
- Answers questions raised at Council meetings by other Members which relate to issues within their Portfolio remit.

Time Allocated to Being a Portfolio Holder

Portfolio Holders do allocate additional time to fulfil their roles, for which they receive remuneration in the form of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs).

		<p>The SRA for the position of Portfolio Holder is assessed on an annual basis by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) for Worcestershire.</p> <p>Whilst the role of Portfolio Holder does take more time than that for standard Councillors, it is not a full-time job. Bromsgrove District Council holds most meetings during the evening and many of the functions listed above can be fulfilled during the evenings. Some of the Portfolio Holders hold full-time jobs alongside their roles as Portfolio Holders.</p> <p>The position of Leader of the Council (and to some extent the Deputy Leader of the Council) is closer to a full-time job than Portfolio Holder, due to the volume of meetings that the Leader is required to attend in addition to the Leader also holding a Portfolio at the Council. These additional duties are reflected in the level of remuneration granted in SRAs to the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.</p>
<p>Delegated Responsibilities</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>The Council has an Officer Scheme of Delegations, which is included at Part 6 of the Council's constitution. The Officer Scheme of Delegations details the delegations granted to officers on an ongoing basis per department. The content of the Officer Scheme of Delegations is reviewed on an annual basis, usually at the Annual Council meeting held in May, to ensure that the delegations remain appropriate for the Council and the communities it serves.</p> <p>The Officer Scheme of Delegations at the time of writing can be accessed from the attached link: 6 Scheme of Delegations May 2023.pdf (bromsgrove.gov.uk)</p> <p>Members sometimes delegate specific actions to particular Officers when considering reports at Cabinet meetings. Officers are required to complete Officer decision forms, once these "one off" delegations have been enacted, in order to ensure transparency in the decision-making process.</p> <p>The terms of reference for the Committees are detailed at Part 5 in the Council's constitution. Again, the content of the terms of reference are reviewed on</p>

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	<p>an annual basis alongside the review of the political balance at the Council. The agreed terms of reference for Committees at the Council at the time of writing can be accessed from the attached link: Committee Terms of Reference - May 2023</p> <p>The majority of Committees at the Council comprise a membership of 11 Councillors; the exceptions to this are the Cabinet and Electoral Matters Committee, with 7 members each as well as the Appeals, Appointments and Statutory Officers Disciplinary Panels, which each have a membership of 5 Councillors.</p> <p>The Council recently established a Council Housing Company and there will be a Shareholders Committee for this company, comprising a membership of elected Members. It is likely that 7 Councillors will be appointed to this Committee.</p> <p>Key decisions are taken collectively by Councillors serving on the Cabinet. Full Council, comprising all Members, reserves the right to make decisions that would impact on the budget framework and on items within the Policy Framework, which is detailed in The Articles at Part 2 of the constitution.</p>
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Accountability

Give the Commission details as to how the authority and its decision makers and partners will be held to account. The Commission is interested in both the internal and external dimensions of this role. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.
Key lines of explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i> ➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i> ➤ <i>How many task and finish groups will there be? And what will their functions be? What time commitment will be involved for members? And how often will meetings take place?</i> ➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i> ➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</i>
Analysis	<p>The Council has a single Overview and Scrutiny Board that commissions time limited Task and Finish reviews, referred to as Task Groups at the Council. The Board holds the Cabinet to account by scrutinising decisions taken by the Cabinet as well as through pre-decision scrutiny of items on the Cabinet Work Programme. The Overview and Scrutiny process is Member-led at Bromsgrove District Council; Members determine what they wish to scrutinise, what evidence to gather and what recommendations they wish to make.</p> <p>During the Governance Systems Task Group investigation, Members proposed that in future there should be a constitutional requirement for the positions of Chairmen of both the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Board to be members of opposition groups. Whilst opposition Members have been appointed to these positions in recent years, this is not currently a constitutional requirement and has therefore been with the consent of the majority group(s). The requirement to appoint opposition Members to these positions would be in line with what is considered to be national best practice and helps to ensure that there is some separation between the executive and scrutiny functions.</p> <p>There is also a permanent, cross-party Finance and Budget Working Group at the Council. The working group, which is chaired by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, meets in private and takes a lead on scrutinising important budget documents. The lead Portfolio Holder for finance attends every meeting of the working group and answers Members' questions at these sessions. As well as scrutinising budget figures, the group also makes recommendations to Cabinet where Members feel this to be appropriate.</p> <p>The number of Task Groups at the Council varies from year to year; at the time of writing, there is a single Task Group investigating community shops and food banks in the District. Task Groups can focus on a range of issues that impact on the local community, not just Council services. In previous years, reviews have focused on issues as diverse as car parking, libraries, flooding and homelessness. The Overview and Scrutiny Board determines the scope of a Task Group investigation and sets the deadline for completion of the review.</p>

A member of the Board is required to be appointed as Chairman of a Task Group and is expected to provide verbal updates to the Board on the progress of a review on an ongoing basis. The remainder of the membership of a Task Group are derived from the "Overview and Scrutiny pool"; non-executive members who may or may not also be members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board. The Task Group Members determine the number and frequency of the meetings, which are scheduled on an ad hoc basis in accordance with Members' availability (most meetings are held in the evenings as many Members have work commitments). Members participating in Task Group investigations are expected to prepare in advance by reading through agenda packs, to suggest questions for interview with expert witnesses, to suggest evidence for consideration and to attend meetings. Members of Task Group sometimes undertake and present their own research, although this varies. At the end of a review, the Chairman of the Task Group is expected to present the group's findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Cabinet as well as Council and / or partner organisations where appropriate.

There are no specific rules at the Council in respect of the numbers of Councillors appointed to Task Groups. However, generally, Members are encouraged to limit the membership to a maximum of 5 Councillors, as this makes it easier to convene meetings that all Members of the Task Group can attend. This number of Councillors also enables all political groups at the Council (currently 4) to be represented, although there is no requirement for the political balance to be applied to the membership of Task Groups.

In terms of the number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees at the Council, the authority has had a single Overview and Scrutiny Board commissioning Task Groups for a number of years. This model has worked well at Bromsgrove. There are a relatively small number of Councillors available to participate in scrutiny activities (24, as Cabinet Members are not permitted to take part in scrutiny). These Members are also all involved in other Committees, including Planning, Licensing and so forth and additional scrutiny Committees could create conflicts in terms of Member availability to participate in meetings if the number of Committees was to increase without a commensurate increase in the number of Members available to serve on those Committees.

There are currently 11 Members on the Overview and Scrutiny Board. This is a similar number to the membership of other important Committees, such as the Planning Committee. Membership of this Committee tends to be quite popular and therefore a membership of 11 provides a significant number of

		<p>Councillors, compared to the overall number of Members at the Council, with an opportunity to participate in meetings.</p> <p>As Bromsgrove District Council is in a two-tier authority area, health scrutiny powers are vested in Worcestershire County Council. However, Bromsgrove is represented on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) by a Member of the Bromsgrove Overview and Scrutiny Board who is appointed at the start of the municipal year. This Councillor is expected to attend HOSC meetings throughout the year, to raise issues on behalf of the Bromsgrove Overview and Scrutiny Board at HOSC meetings and to report back to the Board on the work of HOSC.</p> <p>Currently, Council and Committee meetings, including scrutiny Task Groups, are supported by the Council's Democratic Services team. This is a relatively small team comprising 6 full time equivalent members of staff, including a Trainee, and one part-time Officer (10 hours per week). In recent years, there has been a significant volume of meetings at Bromsgrove District Council as well as Redditch Borough Council, with which Bromsgrove shares many services including Democratic Services. As such, there is currently only capacity to support one Task Group review at the Council at any one time. However, the Governance Systems Task Group proposed that an additional Democratic Services Officer should be employed to help support increasing workloads and, once in post, this additional officer would help to increase capacity within the team which could be used to support more Task Groups.</p>
Statutory Function		<p>This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?</p>
Planning	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i> ➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i> ➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i> ➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i>
	Analysis	<p>From the 01 October 2022 to the end of September 2023, there have been a total of 605 planning applications and related decisions. Of these, 579 were determined under delegated powers, meaning that 4.3% were determined by members. There are no planned changes to the Scheme of</p>

		<p>Delegation that would alter the current position as to which applications are automatically required to be determined by members.</p> <p>The independent Planning Advisory Service (PAS) undertook a review of the Council's Planning Committee in 2022. The recommendations arising from this review have been reported to the Constitution Review Working Group and a number of changes have been proposed to the Council's Planning Committee which are due to be considered at the Council meeting scheduled to take place on 25th October 2023. A copy of the PAS review of the Council's Planning Committee has been attached for consideration together with a copy of the report to Council in respect of proposed changes to the Council's constitution.</p> <p>The Changes proposed in the PAS review include; live streaming Planning Committee meetings on a regular basis, reviewing the length of reports for Planning Committee meetings depending on the significance of the application, introducing officers present at the meetings, the Committee considering information in respect of the outcomes of appeals and, given the quasi-judicial nature of the meetings, using white nameplates for Members rather than coloured nameplates that denote political party affiliations.</p> <p>Whilst changes are proposed to the operation of the authority's Planning Committee, there are no proposals to introduce an Area Planning Committee at the Council. Instead, the Council intends to continue to have a single Planning Committee considering and determining planning applications.</p> <p>Cabinet Members, with the exception of the Leader of the Council, can be appointed as members of the Planning Committee. However, the Chairman of the Planning Committee cannot be a member of Cabinet.</p> <p>In recent years, two meetings of the Planning Committee have been scheduled to take place each month; a lead meeting and a reserve meeting. This arrangement was introduced to provide additional capacity to consider a greater volume of applications that had been delayed during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, over the last 12 months only one meeting of the Committee has tended to take place per month. It is therefore proposed that from 2024/25 onwards, a single meeting of the Planning Committee should be scheduled to take place. Where additional meetings may be needed in future, this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and extra meetings booked in where needed.</p>
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		<p>Members of the Planning Committee are required to attend meetings of the Committee to participate in the debate and vote on items. Prior to serving on the Committee, Councillors are required to attend planning training. Comprehensive planning training is provided to Members at the start of their terms of office, with for example training having been provided by expert external trainers in May 2023. Planning refresher training is offered to Councillors on an annual basis thereafter which Members of the Planning Committee are strongly encouraged to attend alongside additional, ad hoc training arranged throughout the year, e.g. there was an additional training session in respect of planning enforcement in October 2023. Training is provided jointly to Bromsgrove District Councillors and Redditch Borough Councillors to help share costs. In future, it is intended that a mock Planning Committee meeting will form part of this training process.</p> <p>Further commitments may be required from Members of the Planning Committee during the year in terms of attending site visits. Currently, Bromsgrove Members arrange to attend site visits individually. However, prior to the pandemic, site visits were arranged collectively and transportation was provided to Members and this practice may return in due course.</p> <p>The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Planning Committee are required to commit additional time to the Committee. In advance of Committee meetings, they are invited to attend briefings with relevant officers to discuss the agenda. They may also be consulted with respect to public speaking arrangements, for example where requests to speak have been received from residents after the registration deadline.</p>
Licensing	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i> ➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Council has a “parent” Licensing Committee and three different types of Licensing Sub-Committees that focus variously on Taxi licencing, gambling, premises hearings, sex establishments and street trading licences.</p> <p>The main Licensing Committee meets three times per year to consider Licensing policies, although can hold additional meetings during the year where necessary.</p> <p>In terms of Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxi hearings), Bromsgrove District Council schedules in 6 meetings per municipal year and they can take between 2 to 3 hours per</p>

meeting, with a 30-minute Member pre-briefing prior to the meeting commencing. Additional meetings can be convened on an ad hoc basis where required.

Hearings in respect of Street Trading Consent Applications are held on an ad hoc basis as and when Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) receive Street Trading Consent Applications which have received representations. The Council has cancelled one such hearing this municipal year (the applicant withdrew their application) and one went ahead recently. These hearings can take between 2 to 4 hours depending on the number of representations received and the number of public speakers attending, and if the meeting is adjourned in order for Members to conduct a Site Visit, with a 30-minute Member pre-briefing prior to the meeting.

Premises Applications / Review hearings are also held on an ad hoc basis as and when WRS receive Premises Applications or Reviews. The Council have had 2 such hearings this municipal year. They can take between 2 to 6 hours depending on the complexity, the volume of information received, the number of representations and if the police are involved. These hearings also entail a 30 to 45-minute Member pre-briefing prior to the meeting commencing.

Currently, only members of the Licensing Committee are permitted to serve on Licensing hearings conducted by Licensing Sub-Committees. There are 11 Councillors on the Committee and three Councillors are required to serve on each Licensing Sub-Committee hearing plus a reserve Member where available. The membership of the Licensing Sub-Committee hearings is supposed to vary, although it is reliant on Members' availability. As the hearings are held during the day, to accommodate the needs of Licensing applicants, some Members struggle to participate due to work commitments. This means that in practice the number of Councillors from the Committee available to participate in hearings is fewer than 11 and those Members who do regularly participate in hearings are required then to allocate a disproportionate amount of their time, compared to other Councillors on the Committee, to participate in those hearings.

Councillors are not permitted to serve on a Licensing hearing (sub-committee) until they have received Licensing training. Training is provided to Members at the start of their terms of office as part of the Member induction process and refresher training is provided on an annual basis thereafter.

Any member of the Licensing committee can chair sub-committee hearings. Chairing skills training is provided to Members as part of the Member induction process and

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		Licensing Committee members are strongly encouraged to attend Chaining skills training before they can chair a meeting.
Other Regulatory Bodies	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What will they be, and how many members will they require?</i> ➤ <i>Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Council has a combined Audit, Standards and Governance Committee. The Committee previously held 4 meetings a year. However, the Council was issued with a Section 24 Notice in 2022 and in response to this notice, the number of meetings of the Committee increased to provide Members with greater oversight of the Council's progress in terms of addressing the recommendations made by the external auditors in that notice. Once these points have been addressed, it is anticipated that the number of meetings will reduce back to 4 meetings per year, although there is uncertainty at the time of writing about when this will take place.</p> <p>There are currently 11 members serving on the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee. In previous years, 9 Members were appointed to the Committee. However, during the 2022/23 municipal year, difficulties were experienced in terms of holding meetings of the Committee that were quorate and the decision was taken to increase the number of Councillors appointed to the Committee from May 2023 onwards in an attempt to address this problem. To date, meetings of the Committee held since the membership increased have all been quorate.</p> <p>The Audit, Standards and Governance Committee has an important role to provide assurance to Members and the public that there are sound financial management measures in place at the authority. Reports are received from both the Council's financial services team, as well as both the external and interview audit teams. In addition, the Committee has a role in monitoring the Council's standards process and again it is important to make sure that these updates are provided in the public domain to ensure that there is openness and transparency in relation to how the Council handles issues with non-compliance with the authority's Code of Conduct. In this context, it would not be appropriate to delegate the functions of the Committee further to officers in case this should undermine that transparency.</p>
	External Partnerships	Service delivery has changed for councils over time, and many authorities now have a range of delivery partners to work with and hold to account.
	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In</i>

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	<p><i>doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i> ➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">Analysis</p>	<p>Members of the Council are appointed to external organisations as outside bodies every year. Depending on the requirements of that organisation, some appointments are made for a year whilst other appointments can be for a longer period of time. The Cabinet agrees Portfolio Holder appointments made in an ex officio capacity whilst Members agree other outside body appointments at a meeting of Council held early in the municipal year.</p> <p>The extent to which Councillors appointed to outside bodies make decisions at these meetings varies in accordance with the terms of reference for the body to which the Councillor is appointed and the capacity in which the Councillor is appointed. For example, Members appointed to the Joint Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Board on behalf of the Council can take part in collective decision making with representatives of other Councils in that shared service, however, the Council's representative on the Worcestershire HOSC, whilst representing the Council, does not make any decisions as the HOSC is not a decision making body.</p> <p>The Portfolio Holders have a greater workload than other Members arising from working on Outside Bodies as they are appointed to more bodies in an ex officio capacity. However, the amount of time that Councillors appointed to outside bodies have to spend working on duties for external organisations varies according to their terms of reference.</p> <p>Outside body appointments are shared out, cross-party, amongst approximately 20 Councillors. Approximately 50% of the appointments are made in an ex officio capacity.</p> <p>The Chairman of the Council may have additional involvement with other external bodies, in respect of their fund-raising activities for their nominated charities and in terms of the civic engagements they attend.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council and other political group leaders may meet more frequently with representatives of other organisations to discuss matters impacting on the District. In addition, the Leader of the Council, group leaders and Cabinet Members may come into contact with representatives of bodies such as the Local Government Association (LGA), both through attendance at the LGA's annual conference and</p>

	through attendance at training provided by the LGA. As part of the Member induction process, opportunities to attend all of the LGA training sessions designed for new Councillors is promoted to new Members by Democratic Services.
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Community Leadership

The Commission understands that there is no single approach to community leadership and that members represent, and provide leadership to, their communities in different ways. The Commission wants to know how members are required to provide effective community leadership and what support the council offers them in this role. For example, does the authority have a defined role and performance system for its elected members? And what support networks are available within the council to help members in their duties? The Commission also wants to see a consideration of **how the use of technology and social media by the council as a whole, and by councillors individually, will affect casework, community engagement and local democratic representation. Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i> ➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i> ➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i> ➤ <i>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies?</i> ➤ <i>Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident's association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play?</i> ➤ <i>Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</i>
	Analysis	Members manage their ward work individually. Some Councillors choose to hold surgeries whilst other Councillors communicate with their residents in different ways. All Councillors are provided with a Council email address which they are required to use for Council business and they can also opt to provide a telephone number to the public. Members' contact details are publicised on the Council's website.

		<p>Many Councillors attend meetings of Parish Councils held in their wards, even in cases where they are not Parish Councillors. The decision as to whether to attend these meetings is made by the Members themselves. Some Councillors represent wards in which there are a number of Parish Councils, so this can involve attendance at a number of meetings.</p> <p>Some Members use social media to interact with residents. This is organised by Members themselves and is not directly facilitated by the Council. However, Councillors are required to abide by the Council’s Member Code of Conduct when using social media and this is covered in Code of Conduct training as part of the Member Induction process.</p> <p>The Council’s public speaking rules for the Planning Committee enable Councillors to register as ward Members to speak on particular Planning applications. Members are consulted in respect of planning applications for their wards and have the power to call in applications for the consideration of the Planning Committee where they feel that a debate at a meeting of the Committee would be helpful.</p> <p>The Council has a standard report template. Within that template, there is a requirement for report authors to consult with ward Councillors, where appropriate, in respect of proposals that may have specific implications for their wards. The frequency with which this occurs varies according to the focus of the reports.</p> <p>Bromsgrove District Council does not have Area Committees. Currently, there are no plans to introduce Area Committees.</p> <p>There are no particular mechanisms in place to enable the Councillors to interact specifically with minority groups or young people. However, the Council does have an Electoral Matters Committee, which reviews and determines many (although not all) issues relating to elections and issues relating to engagement with people in relation to the local electoral process can be discussed at these meetings, depending on items on the agenda.</p>
<p>Casework</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i>

		<p>➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i></p>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Councillors deal with their case work individually and each Member has their preferred approach to resolving case issues. Sometimes, Councillors choose to refer issues on to Officers, either for a resolution or in order to gather information or clarify factual details. Currently, there is a corporate requirement for Council staff to respond to Member queries within 10 working days.</p> <p>All Members are provided with a key Officer contact list when they are elected, which is included in their induction packs. Members also have access to staff contact details on the Council's Outlook email system.</p> <p>Members do not receive specific support in terms of managing their case work. However, the Democratic Services team are often contacted by Members for information, including in respect of contact details for relevant departments or advice in respect of referring queries on to other services or organisations. All of the Democratic Services team's contact details are provided to Councillors in their induction packs early in their terms of office and the team is in regular contact with Members.</p> <p>In addition, the Democratic Services team produce the Members' newsletter, which contains information useful for Members. The newsletter is published on a monthly basis and is circulated by email for all Members' consideration, with paper copies placed on display in the Members' Room at Parkside.</p> <p>The email addresses provided by the Council to elected Members can be used to communicate with the public alongside any telephone numbers they agree to share with local residents. These details are published on the Council's website.</p> <p>The Council currently provides the majority of Members with paper copies of agenda packs and other key documentation, although Members can go paperless on request. In line with key targets set in the Council's Carbon Reduction Strategy, action is currently being taken to try to reduce the amount of paperwork generated for Committee meetings. This has included the Democratic Services team providing training to Members on how to use the modern.gov app to access and annotate agenda packs, including private papers, electronically. (Modern.gov is the Council's Committee management system).</p>

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		<p>At the request of Members, the Council is gradually in the process of starting to live stream more Council and Planning Committee meetings on a regular basis. This should not change the way that Members interact at Committee meetings, as there remains a legal requirement for Councillors to attend formal meetings in person. However, this does help to enhance the transparency of the local democratic process.</p> <p>Members of the public do request the contact details of Members from time to time via the Council's contact centre. Where this is requested by phone, the contact details are provided and Officers do check whether the public would also like to be provided with contact details for the relevant Council department.</p>
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Other Issues

Respondent may use this space to bring any other issues of relevance to the attention of the Commission.

Summary

In following this template respondents should have been able to provide the Commission with a robust and well-evidenced case for their proposed council size; one which gives a clear explanation as to the governance arrangements and number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future.

Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate other options considered. Explain why these alternatives were not appropriate in terms of their ability to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.

[Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Councillor Workload Survey – Response Summary

12. Which statement best describes the way you feel about your current workload as a councillor?

- I could take on a bigger workload 2
- I feel my workload is about right 7
- I feel my workload is too large 2



13. Do you feel that the number of councillors in Bromsgrove District Council is:

- too few 2
- about right 9
- too many 0



15. What is your employment status (outside of your role as a councillor)?

- working full time 4
- working part time 5
- retired or not working 2
- self employed 0



8. Do you feel that your duties (Council business and/or within the community) have changed in recent years

[More Details](#)

 Insights

- Yes 5
- No 6



9. What do you think is the reason for this?

5 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Covid, more residents working from home. A more pronounced feeling of entitlement to fast responses ,different attitudes as people have moved out of more urban areas, lack of understanding (rural areas have less streetlights pavements etc. Loss of trust in the political landscape, politicians infected by Westminster bad behaviour.
2	anonymous	Increase in demands as society's expectations are for immediate responses to enquiries.
3	anonymous	more planning and enforcement issues are coming to light
4	anonymous	Social media and more proactive engagement with the public and voluntarily get involved with community issues.
5	anonymous	People contact me more frequently during traditionally 'out of office' hours since the pandemic.

10. How would you say your duties have changed in recent years?

5 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	More traffic issues, more tree issues. Finances have tightened so less to offer,
2	anonymous	More demands and higher expectations from the residents.
3	anonymous	i have only been in a year
4	anonymous	More of a 'go to person' which I'm happy with.
5	anonymous	More people are in need of help for a variety of issues but particularly relating to the cost of living crisis and complex issues, as well as issues with wider WCC plans.

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Changes to postal and proxy voting

Identity checking requirements

- All absent vote applications (except for emergency proxy applications) made on or after 31 October 2023 must contain a **National Insurance Number (NINo)** or a reason why one cannot be provided.
- The personal identifiers contained on the application (name, address, date of birth and NINo) must initially be **verified against Department of Works and Pension (DWP) data**.
- Where an application fails to match with DWP data – electors will be required to provide **documentary evidence** to verify their identity. Where this is not possible, electors must submit an **attestation** to confirm their identity.

Online absent vote applications

- Since 31 October 2023 electors (except for anonymous electors) are able to apply for most types of **absent vote online** via <https://www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote>
 - Electors can apply for the following absent votes both online and through a paper application:
 - Postal vote
 - Proxy vote for a particular election or referendum
 - Proxy application for definite or indefinite period for overseas and service electors
 - Electors will not be able to apply for the following absent votes online but can continue to be applied for through a paper application:
 - Proxy application for definite or indefinite period due to disability
 - Proxy application for definite or indefinite period due to employment, service etc.
 - Emergency proxy application
- In these cases the Elector should contact Electoral Services directly.

Maximum period for absent vote applications

- Since 31 October 2023, a **postal vote** can be in place for:
 - a particular poll (poll held on specific date)
 - a definite period of not more than 3 years
 - a maximum period of up to 3 years
- Electors applying for a postal vote will only be able to hold their postal vote until the third 31 January following the date on which their application was granted.
- For electors with a long-term postal vote (in place before 31 October 2023) there will be transitional arrangements. Existing domestic electors will be able to vote by post for relevant polls until 31 January 2026.
- **Proxy voters** can continue to put in place a proxy arrangement for an indefinite period (subject to a three yearly eligibility check and five yearly signature refresh). However, all existing proxy voters who have an arrangement in place before 31 October 2023 must reapply and make a fresh application by 31 January 2024. We will be writing to all of our current proxy voters shortly to inform them of this change.

Changes to proxy voting limits

- The number of people a person can act as proxy for has also been restricted.
- From 31 October 2023, a **person is not entitled to vote as proxy in any electoral area on behalf of more than four electors. Within the four electors, no more than two electors can be domestic electors.** Domestic electors are those electors who are neither service voters nor overseas electors.
- For any by-elections whose notice of election is published from 31 October 2023 to 30 January 2024 – transitional provisions will be in place. Further information will be provided to candidates should this scenario arise.

What does this mean for you?

- For future election campaigns you may wish to direct electors to the online absent vote website to apply for a postal vote - <https://www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote> rather than providing them with a paper application. This web link could also be included in any campaign literature you may send out.
- As absent vote forms are not prescribed, political parties can continue to create their own forms for electors if they wish. However, you must ensure any forms provided from contain all the newly required information. For postal vote applications this includes:
 - Need for the NINo or reason it cannot be provided
 - Whether request is for a particular poll, a definite period that does not exceed 3 years or for the maximum period of up to 3 years.
- Paper absent vote applications designed by the Electoral Commission are also available should you wish to supply paper forms – <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/apply-vote-post>
- If you require any further information on the changes to postal and proxy voting, please contact Electoral Services on elections@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
- We will be issuing a further briefing note in January 2024 outlining the changes to postal vote handling that take effect for polls taking place on or after 2 May 2024.

Darren Whitney

Electoral Services Manager

November 2023

(From a template provided by the Association of Electoral Administrators)

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