

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**4TH DECEMBER 2024, AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors S. Ammar (Chairman), B. Kumar (Vice-Chairman), A. Bailes, R. Bailes, J. Clarke, S. R. Colella, A. M. Dale, J. Elledge, S. M. Evans, D. J. A. Forsythe, E. M. S. Gray, C.A. Hotham, D. Hopkins, R. J. Hunter, M. Marshall, K.J. May, P. M. McDonald, B. McEldowney, S. T. Nock, S. R. Peters, J. Robinson, H. D. N. Rone-Clarke, J. D. Stanley, K. Taylor, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, Mr P. Carpenter, Ms. N Cummings, Mr D. Whitney, Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill and Ms M. Bassett

60\24 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors S. Baxter, H. Jones, R. Lambert, D. Nicholl and S. Robinson.

61\24 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor P. Whittaker declared a pecuniary interest in Minute Item No. 70/24 – the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024 and specifically the discussions around the Woodland Creation Application. This declaration was made on the basis that he could potentially benefit from the proposals that had been discussed at that meeting (although he had not been present at that Cabinet meeting).

62\24 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 23RD SEPTEMBER 2024**

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Council held on 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 2024 were submitted.

The Chairman highlighted a typographical error, whereby Councillor Gray had been listed as having been present at the meeting alongside having given apologies for the meeting and it was noted that she had not been present.

**RESOLVED** that subject to the amendment detailed in the preamble above, the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2024 be approved as a true and correct record.

63\24      **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE**

On behalf of the Council, the Chairman congratulated Councillors J. and S. Robinson on the birth of their baby daughter, Orla Robinson, since the previous meeting of Council. Councillor J. Robinson confirmed that both mother and baby were doing well.

The Head of Paid Service reminded Members that there was a need to respond to the Council's new external auditors, Ernst and Young, concerning any conflicts of interest. A form had been sent to all Members and completed copies had to be returned directly to the auditors.

64\24      **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader thanked Members and Officers for their hard work during the year and wished Members a happy Christmas and New Year.

65\24      **TO RECEIVE COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were no comments, questions or petitions from the public for consideration on this occasion.

66\24      **URGENT DECISIONS**

The Chairman confirmed that no urgent decisions had been taken since the previous meeting of Council.

67\24      **RECOMMENDATION FROM THE LICENSING COMMITTEE**

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee presented a recommendation that had been agreed at a meeting of the Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2024. The recommendation related to the subject of the Gambling Act 2005 Review of Statement of Principles and consideration of consultation responses. Members had endorsed the proposals detailed in this report unanimously at the Committee meeting.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor J. Elledge and seconded by Councillor K. Taylor.

**RESOLVED** that the draft Statement of Principles be approved and published with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025.

68\24      **LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND BOUNDARY REVIEW FOR BROMSGROVE - WARDING PATTERN PROPOSALS**

At the start of the debate in respect of this item, Members agreed to suspend standing orders to permit the Electoral Services Manager and

the Senior Electoral Services Officer respectively to speak at the meeting on this item of business.

The Chairman of the Electoral Matters Committee subsequently presented the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Boundary Review for Bromsgrove – Ward Patterning Proposals. The report had been considered at a meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee held on 22nd November 2024.

Council was advised that the Commission reviewed electoral and boundary arrangements of Councils to make sure as much as possible that they were fair. The first stage of the review was to consider the number of Councillors the District Council should have and the Commission had decided that this should be 31 which agreed with a previous submission from Council. The Commission had praised the Council submission and would be using it as an example of best practice in future reviews.

The review had reached its second stage where the Commission opened a consultation on Ward Patterning for the District. The consultation ran from 24th September to the 2nd December 2024. However, the Commission had kindly allowed the authority the extra time for Council to endorse a submission from Bromsgrove District Council. As part of the agreement, a draft submission had had to be sent to the Commission before the deadline which was received and acknowledged by them on 2nd December 2024.

To create this draft submission, a working group had been formed from the membership of the Electoral Matters Committee in consultation with all ward Members. With the help of officers, the working group had reviewed each ward in turn with ward Members being invited to comment or, if they wished, to attend the relevant working group meetings when their ward was discussed.

The working group had met on four occasions and had in depth discussions on ward changes. The outcomes of these meetings had informed the content of a submission that could be endorsed by Council and sent to the Commission.

The Commission would take into account any submissions made, so it was important the Council provided an official submission. This, with other submissions received, would help the Commission to formulate their draft recommendations in March 2025. The Commission would then run a consultation on their draft recommendations from 6th May to 14th July 2025. Once this concluded, the Commission would publish their final recommendations in November 2025. The legal order would be made in Spring 2026 for implementation in time for the May 2027 elections.

In concluding her comments on the submission, the Chairman of the Electoral Matters Committee thanked the working group for all of their

hard work together with the support of officers, which had helped when drawing together the Council's submission.

Following presentation of the report, there was a discussion of the process that had been followed by the working group when developing the Council's draft submission. Members noted that there had been many robust conversations on the subject and compromises had had to be reached. In particular, there had been some disagreements over whether two-Member or single Member wards should be proposed for certain locations. However, the final submission presented for Council's consideration reflected the outcomes of the discussions held at the Electoral Matters Committee meeting.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor E. Gray and seconded by Councillor K. May.

**RESOLVED** that

- 1) standing orders be suspended during consideration of this item to permit the Electoral Services Manager and the Senior electoral Services Officer respectively to speak on the subject of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Boundary Review for Bromsgrove – Ward Patterning Proposals;
- 2) Council endorse the Council Warding Pattern submission including any amendments made; and
- 3) Council delegate authority to the Chief Executive, following consultation with Group Leaders, to produce and submit the formal submission document to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

(Prior to consideration of this item, the Chairman agreed to withdraw from the meeting on the basis that she had participated in the debate in respect of this item at the Electoral Matters Committee and had expressed her views on the subject at that meeting. The Vice Chairman instead chaired the meeting for this item and the Chairman was not present for either the debate nor vote thereon.)

69\24

**POLITICAL BALANCE REPORT**

The Leader presented a report focusing on changes to the political balance at the Council. Members were advised that this report had been prepared following changes to political group membership at the authority.

During consideration of this item, reference was made to the changing size of the political groups over the course of the year and the potential for the appointments to chairmanship positions to reflect the political make up of the authority. Members noted that at present, Chairmen of Committees were appointed at the first meeting of a Committee held in a municipal year. The suggestion was made that these appointments could instead be confirmed through Council. However, Members also

commented that constitutional rules at the Council had recently been changed to enable Members from political groups that did not form part of the administration on the Cabinet to serve as the Chairmen of certain Committees. Furthermore, it was noted that there would be opportunities to consider which Members to appoint to different chairing roles at the start of the 2025/26 municipal year. The suggestion was made that the most suitable candidate, with the appropriate skills for the position of Chairman of a Committee, should be appointed in each case.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor K. May and seconded by Councillor P. Whittaker.

**RESOLVED** that

- 1) for the remainder of the 2024/25 Municipal Year, the Committees set out in the table in Appendix 1 be appointed and that the representation of the different political groups on the Council on those Committees be as set out in that table until the next Annual Meeting of the Council, or until the next review of political representation under Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, whichever is the earlier; and
- 2) Members be appointed to the Committees and as substitute members in accordance with nominations to be made by Group Leaders.

70\24

**TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CABINET HELD ON 21ST OCTOBER 2024**

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024 were noted.

During consideration of this item, questions were raised as to the reasons why Councillors K. May and K. Taylor, who had declared other disclosable interests at the Cabinet meeting in respect of the Woodland Creation Application had not done so again at the Council meeting. Members were advised that this declaration had not been made by either Councillor as the matter was not due to be debated at the Council meeting.

(Prior to consideration of this item, Councillor P. Whittaker declared a pecuniary interest in the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024 in relation to the debate on the Woodland Creation Application. However, he did not leave the meeting as there was no debate and no questions raised concerning the subject of the Woodland Creation Application.)

71\24

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

The Chairman advised that five Questions on Notice had been received for consideration on this occasion.

## **Question from Councillor M. Marshall to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services**

“Can the Cabinet Member confirm what action is being taken to challenge and reverse Worcs Highways’ unacceptable stance not to attend future Bromsgrove Planning Committee meetings which:

- compromises the professional integrity and independence of our planning officers who will be required to accept and present Worcs Highways evidence at Committee without question
- undermines the legitimate need for members to scrutinise the evidence of a key statutory consultee
- erodes public confidence in the democratic accountability of Highways and the planning process for decisions impacting the District’s residents?”

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services responded by explaining that a formal response had been raised by the Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services with her counterpart at Worcestershire County Council. The following statement had been issued by Worcestershire County Council in response, which was read out at the Council meeting:

*“As the statutory consultee for highways, Worcestershire County Council review planning applications submitted to the District Councils (Local Planning Authorities), and provide comments and recommendations for the districts to use as part of their wider assessment of the individual planning applications.*

*If an application is to be determined by committee, local planning authorities make a recommendation based on all the evidence before them including from the full range of statutory consultees.*

*There is no requirement of statutory consultees to attend planning committees and the county council have never stated that they will not attend future committees.*

*The council will continue to attend where this is important or where the Chair of the Planning Committee considers it contentious or of wider public interest, balancing demands with resources and avoiding situations where attendance does not add any value.”*

Councillor Marshall subsequently asked the following supplementary question:

“That is progress, as they previously said they would not be attending. How will we control this and make sure it happens?”

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration suggested that when Planning Committee members received the agenda for a meeting of the Committee, they should check the content straight away. Where Members identified an application where they felt it would be appropriate

for a representative of Worcestershire Highways authority to be present, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services suggested that they should notify the Chairman of the Planning Committee meeting immediately so that a request could be submitted to Worcestershire County Council. Furthermore, it was suggested that the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services could be copied into this correspondence.

### **Question from Councillor J. Clarke to the Leader**

“Will you take action to ensure that Bromsgrove retains its Fairtrade Town status?”

The Leader replied by commenting that she was proud that, over ten years ago, when Fairtrade products were quite rare in shops and eateries, the Council had signed up to the Fairtrade Foundation Charity to be granted Fairtrade status.

The authority supported Fairtrade Fortnight events in the town which were run by Churches Together and additionally local businesses took part in Fairtrade Fortnight, adding menu items made with fairtrade products as a part of this.

The Leader also reported that she was proud to find that when she walked around the town, visiting many cafes and restaurants particularly, that Fair Trade, ethical and organic products were commonplace.

The Council’s commitment over a decade ago to becoming a Fairtrade Town, not just in status, but through on the ground action, had paid dividends and provided residents and visitors with the opportunity to make a conscious choice when they purchased a drink, food or produce in the town. Businesses recognised the demand and even those that weren’t at the forefront of the change, had caught up.

However, the Council was not complacent and even though the authority hadn’t renewed its status with the foundation, it continued to show support for Fairtrade products including through the Green Fair (which boasted Fairtrade products for sale).

As a Council, the authority had to show a level playing field and with more conscientious consumers demanding much more from the products they bought, for example vegan friendly, cruelty free and ethically sourced products, the authority could not favour one cause over another. For this reason, the Council would not be renewing the fairtrade status but remained committed to supporting, where possible, the fairtrade concept, along with other consumer choices.

## **Question from Councillor S. Evans to the Cabinet Member for Finance**

“Nationally it has been revealed that not all households eligible for council tax reduction on the grounds of severe mental impairment are receiving it. Do we know what proportion of eligible households in Bromsgrove are actually receiving their entitlement?”

The Cabinet Member for Finance advised that in cases where a person resident within a property in Bromsgrove District was classified as severely mentally impaired, a Council Tax discount or exemption might be available. To be categorised as severely mentally impaired a person had to:

- i) have a “*severe impairment of intelligence or social functioning, however caused, which appears to be permanent*” and
- ii) be eligible for a qualifying benefit
- iii) and needed to be certified by a registered medical practitioner as severely mentally impaired.

Certification was made by a registered medical practitioner during the exemption / discount application process. Without this certification, there was no eligibility for an exemption/reduction and on that basis all eligible persons were receiving a discount. The availability of an exemption/discount was promoted within the Council Tax explanatory notes and on the Council’s website.

The Council would only know a household was eligible if they declared it as part of their claim. It was not, therefore, possible to detail the exact proportion receiving their entitlement.

- In total there were 253 people in the District disregarded from Council Tax based on severe mental impairment.
- There were 128 exempt dwellings due to occupation by a person who was severely mentally impaired.

The authority already publicised information on discounts and exemptions. This was included with every Council Tax demand notice. The information was also advertised prominently on the Council’s website

The Council proactively promoted the discount/exemption when communicating with customers that might be eligible for the discount.

Advice agencies such as the CAB, and support groups for people with, or the families of people with Alzheimer’s, Dementia and other conditions promoted the discount. The high profile campaigner, Mr Martin Lewis, also mentioned it regularly.

Reference was also made in the response to the following table:



“Level of reduction	Circumstances which lead to reduction
100% Reduction	<p>A full council tax exemption is available where:</p> <p>The home is only occupied by people who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i) Severely mentally impaired</li></ul> <p>Or by one or more severely mentally impaired persons and one or more</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>ii) Qualifying students;</li><li>iii) relevant Ukrainian persons</li></ul> <p>Qualifying students include student, student nurses, apprentices, youth training trainees, and spouses of non-British students.</p> <p>A relevant Ukrainian Person is a person with permission to enter or remain in the UK under the homes for Ukraine scheme.</p> <p>To qualify for exemption the severely mentally impaired person, or students/Ukrainian person must be the person who would be liable for council tax, this prevents institutions established for providing care to people who are SMI from receiving exemption.</p>
50% reduction	<p>A 50% reduction is available where all the residents of a property are disregarded.</p> <p>When a SMI person is resident in a property with another person who is also disregarded 50% discounts will be applied.</p> <p>This will apply where an SMI person is living with someone who is disregarded as a carer. For example, where a single adult is resident with an elderly resident who is SMI and to whom they are providing care.</p> <p>To be classified as a carer a person must be providing care for over 35 hours per week to a person in receipt of a qualifying benefit.</p>
25% reduction	<p>A 25% reduction is available where there is only one resident of a property or all but one of the residents are disregarded.</p> <p>When calculating the number of residents any person who is classified as SMI will be disregarded.</p>

	In cases where an SMI person lives with another individual who is not disregarded a 25% discount will be awarded.”
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**Question from Councillor J. Robinson to the Cabinet Member for Strategic housing and Health and Wellbeing**

“Are all the new homes on the Council’s Burcot Lane Development now occupied?”

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Housing and Health and Wellbeing advised that the current occupancy for the homes was as follows

- Service Charge Area 2 (22 x houses/maisonettes).
- 6 properties for sale – 3 were occupied and 3 had offers accepted going through the legal process.
- 6 Shared Ownership Properties – Sold to Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT). They were in the process of marketing the properties by the date of the meeting.
- The remaining 10 properties had been leased to Spadesbourne Homes Limited and were occupied.

Service Charge Area 1 (Allen Court) - Whilst none of these units were occupied, work was under way to satisfy the legal requirements of a building owner before BDHT would accept the transfer. This work was expected to be complete and hand over to BDHT and Spadesbourne Homes Limited was anticipated within two weeks. Assurance was given that officers from both Bromsgrove District Council and BDHT were working closely together alongside the agents for the properties to make sure everything was in place to ensure the properties were occupied as soon as possible.

Councillor J. Robinson subsequently asked the following supplementary question:

“Thank you. Could you give an update in two weeks’ time if there is a delay?”

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Housing and Health and Well Being confirmed that she would be happy to provide this update to Members.

**Question from Councillor R. Hunter to the Leader**

“What are your priorities for ensuring the proposals in the English Devolution White Paper work in the best interests of Bromsgrove?”

The Leader responded by highlighting that the English Devolution White paper had not yet been released. Once received, the Leader would be considering the contents in detail alongside seeking information from officers and central bodies to understand the detail, options, and implications of the proposals and framework(s). There would be early

discussions with counterpart Leaders within Worcestershire the Leader would also be engaging with Bromsgrove Group Leaders, Cabinet and Council at the earliest opportunity when more information was known.

Members would always prioritise that which was in the best interest of the community and the people of Bromsgrove. The Leader endeavoured to ensure that the Council's views and voice was heard clearly within every ongoing consideration and to debate the matter based on local engagement and understanding.

Whilst the Council anticipated the potential for the current County and District arrangements to not remain in its current structure or form, it was critical that the authority took every opportunity within a wider public service reform agenda to consider what was best, rather than focus purely on structural arrangements.

The Leader concluded by noting that she looked forward to speaking with group leaders as well as other elected representatives for Bromsgrove when the detail was clearly understood.

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### **MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

The Chairman confirmed that there were two Motions on Notice for consideration at this Council meeting.

#### **Private School Business Rates**

The following Motion on Notice was submitted by Councillor S. Evans for Council's consideration:

#### **“Private school business rates**

Council calls on Cabinet as part of the budget setting process for 2025/26 to ring fence any additional income that will result from the move by central Government to impose business rates on private schools (and that is retained by Bromsgrove District). The ring fenced pot will be used to fund development activities for young people as part of the Council's leisure and culture brief and this will include activities aimed at supporting the development of SEND young people.”

The Motion was proposed by Councillor S. Evans and seconded by Councillor J. Clarke.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Evans highlighted that the Motion had been submitted with the aim to ensure that the Council made the most of the current situation to the benefit of the local community. It was suggested that there would be approximately £550,000 additional income in business rates within the District as a result of the Government's rule changes and approximately half of this income would be retained by Bromsgrove District Council. Furthermore, the suggestion was made that this funding should be ringfenced for

investment in initiatives designed to support local young people. Whilst the Motion did not call on Members to determine the exact initiatives that should receive funding under this process, it was noted that this could include such activities as cycling classes and other youth activities. The investment would be justified on the basis that young people represented the future of the District.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Clarke acknowledged that the Council had financial pressures that needed to be addressed over the following years. However, he suggested that the action proposed in the Motion came within the Council's brief and would have a positive impact in the community.

Members subsequently discussed the Motion in detail and in doing so noted that the Council would consider any additional business rates income generated from private schools and the use of this as part of the 2025/26 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) to address any pressures that the Council faced and to fund priorities as agreed by Council.

It was noted that ring fencing this funding would run counter to how the Council allocated resources. The Council budgeted for the use of its resources in the following way.

- In Tranche 1 of the budget the Council clarified and documented the various pressures (legislative and Council priorities) on the budget as well as allowable additional funding sources. At this point of the process, there was usually a deficit position.
- By Tranche 2, the Council would understand the total funding available to the authority via the Local Government Finance Settlement and these additional sources of funding were added to the position agreed at Tranche 1 to give an overall position from which additional savings or priorities could be added.

By ringfencing funds before this point, proper prioritisation of resources could not be achieved across the whole Council. However, it was noted that the Motion proposed an alternative approach, whereby funding was requested for development activities for young people as part of the Council's leisure and culture brief. Although using the funding in this way was addressing a Council priority, these services were discretionary in nature and the Council needed to aim to ensure initially that mandatory services could be delivered as part of the prioritisation process, using available resources, before assessing discretionary items of expenditure.

Reference was also made to the responsibilities of the respective Councils in a two-tier authority area. Members noted that in Worcestershire, the County Council, rather than Bromsgrove District Council, was responsible for provision of services to young people, including SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) services. Concerns were raised that allocation of the income from business rates levied to private schools to youth activities provided by the District

Council could be regarded as double taxation in this context. However, in response to this point, Members noted that there were challenges nationally in relation to SEND funding and therefore any additional financial assistance would be welcome. In addition, questions were raised as to the reasons why the Council had chosen to support a Motion on Notice at a recent Council meeting relating to electric vehicle charging points and to ringfence funding for library services in previous years, which were not necessarily within the Council's remit. However, it was noted that the subject of electric charging points was relevant to the Council in relation to use of Council land for the installation and use of this infrastructure. In respect of the library funding, it was noted that this had been routed through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for use on community centres.

Consideration was also given to the various routes through which Members could suggest items for inclusion in the MTFP. There was the Finance and Budget Working Group, which held meetings throughout the year and at which suggestions could be brought forward by Members for consideration. Any recommendations arising from meetings of the group would be referred for further consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and subsequently the Cabinet. Where the group's proposals were endorsed at these various stages, then these could be incorporated into the MTFP that would be approved by the Council in February.

Concerns were raised that there was likely to be a significant gap arising in the Council's budget of circa £500,000 to cover the requirement to introduce a food waste collection service by spring 2026. Members commented that the Council would need to adopt a prudent approach to managing the authority's budget in order to cover the costs of delivering this service. With this in mind, it was suggested that the Council was not necessarily in a position to allocate funding to support youth initiatives in the District.

The timing of the local government settlement and the potential changes to the calculation of this settlement for 2025/26 were also discussed. Members commented that it was not unusual for the Government to delay confirming the local government settlement until late December. However, Members also noted that the formula that would be used to calculate the settlement for 2025/26 was likely to differ from recent years, as the Government had indicated that funding would now be based on levels of deprivation. There was therefore some uncertainty about the level of funding that would be granted to Bromsgrove District.

The Council's projected budget position over the course of the MTFP was also discussed. Whilst there was a small surplus forecast for the first year of the budget, growing deficits were projected for years two and three and therefore the Council had to be careful when making decisions about how to commit expenditure.

In discussing the Motion, a number of Members noted that their opposition to the Motion should not be viewed as indicating that they did not recognise the importance of supporting SEND children. Indeed, many Members, both those in favour of the Motion and opposed, commented on their commitment to supporting young people with special educational needs.

Clarification was provided that the Motion was not seeking to propose that the funding be used to provide alternative SEND services or other educational services to young people, which was recognised as being a responsibility of Worcestershire County Council. Instead, it was noted that Bromsgrove District Council had lead responsibility for Leisure and Cultural Services in the District and could provide additional support to young people in this context.

At the end of a lengthy debate, on being put to the vote the Motion was defeated.

### **Development of Brownfield Sites**

Councillor D. Hopkins presented the following Motion on Notice for Council's consideration. In presenting the Motion, Councillor Hopkins proposed alterations to the wording of the Motion which had been included in the agenda for the meeting:

“With the welcomed £700000 given to this council by the Labour Government to enable brownfield sites to be built upon and recognising that each property built on a brownfield site will ease the pressure on our precious greenbelt, we call upon the Cabinet to immediately concentrate and focus on developing brownfield sites with immediate effect.”

The proposed wording of the Motion was subsequently discussed and Members noted that the Cabinet was not in a position to make decisions about developing brownfield sites. Instead, Members commented that the Cabinet would consider and make recommendations to Council on planning policy matters, including the Local Plan, whilst the Planning Committee's role was to consider specific planning applications. Reference was also made to the role of the Strategic Planning Steering Group (SPSG) at the Council which, whilst not a decision-making body, provided all Members with an opportunity to review and suggest amendments to planning policies that would subsequently be reported through Cabinet onto Council. In this context, following a brief adjournment, the following altered wording was proposed to the Motion:

“With the welcomed £700000 given to this council by the Labour Government to enable brownfield sites to be built upon and recognising that each property built on a brownfield site will ease the pressure on our precious greenbelt, we call upon the *Strategic Planning Steering Group to immediately concentrate and focus on considering the development of brownfield sites with immediate effect.*”

The Motion was proposed by Councillor D. Hopkins and seconded by Councillor K. Taylor.

In subsequently debating the Motion, concerns were raised about the removal of any reference to an audit of brownfield sites, which had been originally incorporated into the Motion that had been published in the agenda for the meeting. The suggestion was made that this audit might still be useful, particularly in a context where the Government would be requiring thousands of homes to be built in the District over the following years. However, it was also noted that the outcomes of the Government's consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework still remained to be confirmed on the date of the meeting. In the meantime, the Council would continue to review the potential to develop on brownfield sites, some although not all of which would be suitable for development.

It was noted that there had already been some work undertaken to review brownfield sites in the District. As part of this process, Members were advised that five or six sites had been identified. Although more such sites might be identified in future, the value of an audit in this context was therefore questioned.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried.

**RESOLVED** that

With the welcomed £700000 given to this council by the Labour Government to enable brownfield sites to be built upon and recognising that each property built on a brownfield site will ease the pressure on our precious greenbelt, we call upon the Strategic Planning Steering Group to immediately concentrate and focus on considering the development of brownfield sites with immediate effect.

(During consideration of this item there was a brief adjournment from 19.24 – 19.30.)

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**TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROCUREMENT SERVICES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING**

There was no urgent business for consideration on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 7.43 p.m.

Chairman