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Cabinet
7th January 2025

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

7TH JANUARY 2025, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), S. J. Baxter (Deputy Leader), S. R. Colella, B. McEldowney, K. Taylor (from Minute Item No. 58/24), S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

Observers: Councillor P. M. McDonald and Councillor S.T. Nock

Officers: Mrs. S. Hanley, Mr P. Carpenter, Mr. G. Revans, Mr S. Parry, Mr M. Austin, Mr. M. Bough and Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill

54/24 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

Members noted that Councillor K. Taylor would be arriving late for the meeting.

55/24 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

56/24 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 10TH DECEMBER 2024**

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 10th December 2024 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 10th December 2024 be approved as a true and correct record.

57/24 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 9TH DECEMBER 2024**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 9th December 2024 were considered.

The Leader confirmed that there were no outstanding recommendations from this meeting requiring the Cabinet's consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 9th December 2024 be noted.

REFUSE FLEET REPLACEMENT AND WHEELED BIN PRESSURES

The Environmental Services Manager presented a report on the subject of the replacement of the Council's refuse vehicle fleet and pressures relating to wheeled bins used by the authority.

Cabinet was reminded that at a previous meeting, Members had received an update on the pressures on the vehicle fleet used for the delivery of the waste service and the Council's capital programme had been reprofiled in response to this. Officers had subsequently identified issues with the bins used by the Council. The authority had a diamond bin system whereby the bins were lifted to dispose of waste. The Council was the only authority to retain this system as all other local authorities had ceased to use this following a tragic accident in Coventry involving the lifting mechanism. Consequently, there were no vehicles available to purchase that were suitable for lifting this type of bin.

The Council could continue to use the existing bins and maintain the existing vehicle fleet. However, the vehicles used by the authority were aging and this created challenges, including financial challenges in the long-term. Therefore, Officers were proposing that the authority's bins needed to be replaced with industry standard comb bins. There were two different sizes of comb bin available to use which Cabinet was invited to consider.

The report was being considered in a context in which the Government was introducing extended producer responsibilities, whereby manufacturers would be taxed on packaging. The funds arising from this tax would be allocated to public services and Bromsgrove District Council was due to receive £1.04 million initially, with annual contributions anticipated. However, Members were asked to note that the level of funding received from this source was likely to decline over time as manufacturers made changes to their packaging in order to reduce their tax liabilities.

During consideration of this item, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Councillor P. McDonald, was invited to address Cabinet on behalf of the Board on this subject. Members were advised that the Board had pre-scrutinised the report at a meeting held on 6th January 2025. The Board had noted that in the report it had been suggested that provision of smaller bins would help to encourage an increase in recycling rates in the District. However, the Board had had concerns about the impact that this might have in the local community and therefore had recommended that the Council should invest in the larger bins.

Members subsequently discussed the proposals detailed in the report and in so doing commented on the following matters:

- The procurement of new vehicles alongside new bins. It was confirmed that these would be owned by the Council.
- The typographical errors that had been identified in the report, including the figure in the second recommendation which should have been recorded as £2.2 million.
- The hard work of the Waste Collection Service team.
- The historic decision that had been taken by the Council to invest in diamond bins, which had been considered to be cutting edge at the time.
- The length of time that the diamond bins had been used, for over 20 years. Officers expressed hopes that the replacement comb bins could be utilised for a similar amount of time in order to achieve value for money.
- The amount of funding that Redditch Borough Council was due to receive for extended producer responsibilities. Officers confirmed that this figure was likely to be circa £200,000 lower than for Bromsgrove District Council due to the lower number of households.
- The numbers of green, grey and brown bins used by households in the District. Officers advised that there were approximately 43,000 households in the District and roughly this number of green and grey bins per household. In addition, there were approximately 20,000 brown bins, as not all residents opted to receive the garden waste collection service.
- The bins that would be provided to households on request prior to investment in the new bins. Cabinet was advised that there were occasions when residents requested replacement bins and, as diamond bins were no longer available, comb bins had already started to be provided to these households.
- The potential for the availability of smaller bins to be promoted to residents, whilst providing the larger bins as a standard. In particular, Members commented that single person households might prefer to use smaller bins.
- The communications that would be issued alongside replacement of the bins. Officers explained that funding was proposed in the MTFP to allocate to communications in respect of this matter.

RESOLVED

- 1) The Council agrees to replace all “Diamond” lift bins in use across the Residual, Recycling, and Garden Waste services in Bromsgrove District during the 2025/26 financial year with industry standard “Comb” lift bins.
- 2) To endorse the proposal to replace all the Council’s existing “Diamond” wheeled bins with industry standard “Comb” 240ltr wheeled bins.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) The Council allocates £2.2 million Capital funding in the Medium-Term Financial Plan for the 2025/26 financial year for the purchase and distribution of these bins.

59/24

INTRODUCTION OF FOOD WASTE COLLECTION

The Environmental Services Manager presented a report concerning the introduction of a food waste collection service in Bromsgrove District.

Cabinet was advised that the Environment Act 2021 had introduced a new statutory duty for local authorities to provide a weekly food waste collection service. Confirmation had not yet been provided to the Council on the new burdens funding that would be made available by the Government to the authority to help cover the costs of delivering this service. However, it was anticipated that the Council would receive an additional circa £900,000 to cover the costs of new caddies and outdoor bins for household use for the food waste.

At a local level, there were space issues at Bromsgrove depot in relation to accommodating a new vehicle or vehicles for the delivery of a food waste collection service. These vehicles could not be accommodated alongside the existing fleet. Officers had concluded that it would not be viable to purchase more land to accommodate the additional vehicles, so this was not considered to be a suitable option for the Council at this time.

Taking into account existing pressures and uncertainties, Officers were proposing that the Council should procure the food waste collection service through a private sector company. Ideally, the Council would have aimed to deliver the service inhouse, but this was not considered to be feasible at this stage. The proposal was to procure the service for a period of up to eight years.

To maximise interest in this opportunity within the private sector, Bromsgrove District Council would aim to procure this service jointly with Redditch Borough Council and Wyre Forest District Council. There was no guarantee that the procurement exercise would be successful. However, if the procurement process was unsuccessful, the Council could report back to the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) highlighting the issues that had been experienced and a request would then be submitted to extend the deadline for the introduction of the service in the District.

Once the report had been presented, Members discussed the following matters in detail:

- The procurement of an external provider for the food waste collection service and the implications for other waste collection

services. Cabinet was advised that existing services would be unaffected and would continue to be delivered inhouse.

- The potential for the risks to the authority arising from the introduction of a food waste collection service to be reduced through procurement of a third party to deliver the service. Officers explained that these risks would also be shared with Redditch Borough and Wyre Forest District Council by undertaking joint procurement.
- The consultation that had already been undertaken with representatives of the Trades Unions and staff employed in the Waste Collection team to explain the rationale for the proposed way forward in this instance.
- The soft market testing exercise that had been undertaken by five Worcestershire authorities, including Bromsgrove District Council, prior to this date and the extent to which the lack of interest expressed by private sector organisations at this time reflected the potential interest in the proposed contract with the public sector. Officers explained that it was not unusual to not attract interest in soft market testing exercises because they were not guaranteed to result in contract work. Therefore, this could not be regarded as representative of the likely outcome of the procurement exercise.
- The dates when Redditch Borough and Wyre Forest District Councils were due to consider this issue. Officers clarified that the Redditch Executive Committee was due to consider the matter at a meeting on 14th January 2025 and it was anticipated that Wyre Forest District Council would discuss the matter in February 2025.
- The timeframes for undertaking the procurement exercise. Cabinet was advised that the aim was to go out to tender in spring 2025.
- The forthcoming deadline, in spring 2026, for Councils to introduce a food waste collection service and the implications of possible non-compliance. Members were advised that as long as the Council had a clear plan in place the authority would not be failing in terms of compliance.
- The lack of anaerobic digestors in Worcestershire to dispose of the food waste and the implications of this situation. Officers explained that Worcestershire County Council was responsible for disposal of the waste and once the food waste was loaded onto the vehicles, the County Council needed to direct District Councils on where this waste should be disposed.
- The extent to which the Council would be able to meet the Government's deadline to introduce the food waste collection service if this was not outsourced to the private sector. Officers confirmed that the Council was unlikely to meet the deadline if a decision was taken to deliver this service inhouse at this stage.
- The benefits arising from outsourcing this service, which would include the potential to share risks with other authorities, to gather data on service delivery and to use that data to inform decisions taken in eight years' time.
- The forthcoming requirement for an additional circa 9,000 houses to be developed in Bromsgrove District, under the National

Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the extent to which this had been taken into account when planning arrangements for the collection and disposal of food waste.

- The extent to which there were risks associated with food collection, including pests, and how these risks would be addressed.
- Long-haul disposal arrangements for food waste and the arrangements for use of transfer stations.
- The smaller bins that had been suggested by DEFRA. Members commented that this was unlikely to be welcomed by local residents.
- The potential for a similar food waste disposal system to Norway to be introduced in Bromsgrove and the challenges involved in this. Officers clarified that the system in the UK was less advanced than in parts of the continent and unfortunately not set up to be as progressive.
- The extent to which householders were likely to continue to dispose of food waste in their grey bins.
- The concerns that some residents might have about using slop buckets in their homes.
- The potential for food waste to be comingled with other sources of waste and collected at the same time. Cabinet was advised that the Environment Act placed a legal requirement for food waste to be collected separately on a weekly basis.
- The patterns in terms of food waste collection that had emerged in parts of the country where this service had already been introduced. Members were asked to note that some householders would not use the service every week whilst other residents would not use the service at all.
- The likelihood that some residents would continue to dispose of food waste in their compost bins.
- The potentially different food waste patterns that might emerge over time across the various districts in the county.
- The need to encourage residents to reduce the amount of food that they wasted.
- The arrangements that would be in place should the successful company through the procurement process go into administration. Officers advised that there would be appropriate insurance arrangements in place to address this risk. Working with other local authorities would also help to offset this risk.
- The risk that some residents would leave caddies outside their properties creating an unsightly appearance. Officers explained that communications would be issued in relation to this matter.
- The reasons why the Council had opted for an eight-year length for the proposed contract. Cabinet was advised that this would help to affray the financial costs involved. For a shorter contract, a private sector company was likely to require the same financial investment from the authority but over a shorter period of time and this could be difficult for the Council to manage.

- The vehicles that would be purchased for the delivery of the food waste collection service and whether the Council would own these vehicles. Officers explained that the third-party company would own the vehicles. There would be the option for the organisation to sell or transfer the asset to the Council's ownership at the end of the eight years, however, the general lifespan of a vehicle such as this tended to be eight years.
- The potential for the Council to purchase land to accommodate a food waste collection service. Officers reiterated that this option was not considered to be viable as there was not sufficient time remaining to enable the Council to provide this service inhouse in time to meet the Government's deadline.
- The work that had been undertaken to date to highlight with DEFRA that the Council lacked capacity at the depot to accommodate a food waste collection service. Officers confirmed that this issue had been raised with DEFRA but, like other authorities that had raised this issue, officers had been advised that this was the Council's issue to resolve.

During consideration of this item, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, Councillor P. McDonald, was invited to address the Cabinet on behalf of the Board. Members were advised that the report had been pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Board held on 6th January 2025. Whilst the Committee had not proposed any specific recommendations on this subject, concerns had been raised about the extent to which it was likely that there would be interest within the private sector to deliver this service. Cabinet was therefore asked to take into account the potential need for a "plan B" moving forward, in case initial plans could not be progressed.

Based on these concerns, Members discussed the potential to introduce an additional proposal as part of the decision making on this report. This was worded in the following manner:

"Officers to consider arrangements should procurement of a food waste collection service be unsuccessful."

Members commented that this additional proposal would help to ensure that the Council continued to take action, in light of the tight deadlines, even if the procurement process was unsuccessful.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Subject to the outcome of negotiations, the Council approves the introduction of a joint Food Waste Collection Service, working with Redditch Borough Council and Wyre Forest District Council to deliver the authority's statutory duties under the Environment Act 2021 regarding a Food Waste Collection service;
- 2) Delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services following consultation with the Section 151 Officer, the Principal Solicitor

(Contracts, Commercial and Procurement) and the Portfolio Holders for Finance and Environmental Services respectively to, subject to the agreement of recommendations 1 and 4:

- a) to negotiate and agree terms with Redditch Borough Council and Wyre Forest District Council to enter into a joint tender for a shared food waste collection service;
 - b) tender and award a dedicated weekly food waste collection service through a third party for a period of 8 years commencing no later than 31 March 2026.
- 3) Officers to consider arrangements should procurement of a food waste collection service be unsuccessful.

RECOMMENDED that

- 4) The Council allocate £1,000,000 Revenue Funding in the Medium-Term Financial Plan as an operational budget from 2026/27 to fund the Food Waste Collection Service in the Borough, as accounted for within tranche 1 of the budget.

60/24

FINAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2025/26

The Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer presented the Final Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26 for Members' consideration.

Cabinet was advised that the Council Tax Support Scheme had not been amended and remained largely the same as the version that had been approved in 2024. The only difference was that the whole scheme had been uprated by 1.7 per cent in line with the approved increases in national benefits. The Council brought in this banded scheme in 2021 and the full review undertaken in the previous year's budget suggested that most Councils now used this type of matrix.

The Council spent circa £5 million on Council Tax Support through the collection fund, with 70 per cent paid for by Worcestershire County Council, 13 per cent paid for by Bromsgrove District Council, 12 per cent paid for by the West Mercia Police and 5 per cent covered by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service.

There were circa 1,800 pension aged people living in the District who were receiving Council Tax Support (paid for by the Government) and 2,300 working aged residents.

Members welcomed the report and in doing so commented on the importance of the Council Tax Support Scheme in terms of providing support to some of the most vulnerable residents living in the District.

During consideration of this item, Members noted that the name of the lead Portfolio Holder should have been included in the table on the first page of the report.

RECOMMENDED that the council tax reduction scheme be retained for the 2025-26 tax year, subject to the uprating of income bands by 1.7 per cent in-line with increases to national benefits.

61/24

COUNCIL TAX BASE 2025/26

The Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer presented the Council Tax Base 2025/26 report for Cabinet's consideration.

Members were advised that this was a statutory report which was required to allow precepting authorities to calculate how much Council Tax they would raise in the upcoming financial year.

The figures provided in the report were based on data on the Council Tax system as at the 30th November 2024 adjusted for:

- The latest dwelling numbers.
- Discounts and exemptions such as Council Tax Support.
- An allowance of 1 per cent for non-collection of Council Tax (with Members being advised that the Council's in year collection rate was approximately 98.5 per cent.)
- The new Council Tax base was 38,359.9 Band "D" equivalent properties (Members were informed that the previous financial year this figure had been 37,997.7).

The report had been pre-scrutinised at a recent meeting of the Finance and Budget Working Group. During the meeting, Members had requested a breakdown of the number of properties in each band in the District. The following information had subsequently been confirmed, which was highlighted with Cabinet Members for consideration:

- Band A – 3,952 properties
- Band B – 7,459 properties
- Band C – 9,342 properties
- Band D – 8,056 properties
- Band E – 7,212 properties
- Band F – 3,849 properties
- Band G – 2,924 properties
- Band H – 381 properties

Members were asked to note that whilst these figures added together might seem to differ from the Council Tax Base figure, this was because the Council Tax Base focused on Band D equivalent numbers.

The Finance and Budget Working Group had also questioned which areas of the District were impacted by the Trent River Management Area in terms of flood defences. Officers confirmed that this included parts of Hollywood, Wythall, Frankley and Rubery. Confirmation was provided that flood defence area information was included in the report as these figures were needed by Worcestershire County Council, which was the responsible lead authority for flood defences.

RESOLVED that the amount calculated by Bromsgrove District Council as the Council Tax Base for the whole area for 2025/26 is approved at 38,359.9 as detailed in appendix 1 to include the individual parish elements

62/24

DISABLED FACILITY GRANT OMBUDSMAN'S REPORT

The Strategic Housing Services Manager presented the Disabled Facilities Grant Ombudsman's report for Cabinet's consideration.

Members were advised that this was a statutory report which needed to be presented for Cabinet's consideration. The Local Government Ombudsman had concluded that there had been maladministration in relation to the provision of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding support to a local resident. There had been a number of partner organisations involved in this complex case, including Bromsgrove District Council, Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT), Worcestershire Children's First and other bodies. All partners had received criticisms in the report and recommendations had been made by the Ombudsman to address the issues that had been identified.

Since the report had been issued by the Ombudsman, the Council had been working to address the recommendations detailed in the report. This had included taking a lead on communications and the introduction of a form for the DFG process that residents could sign to indicate that they understood and were satisfied with the works that would be undertaken using the funding.

Following the presentation of the report, Members expressed their disappointment that this situation had occurred in this instance. There was general agreement that lessons needed to be learned from the situation to ensure that services improved in future. As part of this process, the suggestion was made that the new form that had been introduced for the DFG scheme should involve tripartite approval; from the Occupational Therapist involved in undertaking an assessment of an applicant; from the applicant; and from the Council. It was suggested that this would be particularly helpful for more vulnerable applicants, who might require additional support, as well as providing an audit trail. Officers agreed to review and update the form accordingly.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the content of the report be noted; and
- 2) the actions implemented in response to the recommendations of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman be endorsed.

63/24

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTFP) TRANCHE 1 - (TO FOLLOW)

The Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer presented the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Tranche 1 report (following

consultation) 2025/26 to 2027/28. In presenting this report, an update in respect of consultation feedback was circulated at the meeting (attached at Appendix 1 to the minutes).

Members were reminded that at the Cabinet meeting held on 10th December 2024 the Tranche 1 MTFP was presented. This report had then been considered prior to consultation with the public and other stakeholders. The authority had subsequently consulted on the Tranche 1 budget proposals. This budget consultation opened on 5th December 2024. As part of the consultation process, an email invitation was sent to members of the Bromsgrove Community Panel to take part in the consultation. The survey was also promoted on a variety of social media channels. The survey closed at 12 noon on Thursday 2nd January 2025. The response rate from the community panel members had been 48 per cent. There were a total of 278 valid responses received overall.

In terms of responses to specific questions, Members were referred to Question 2, which provided a breakdown of the consultation responses by location. The highest percentage of returns had been received from Aston Fields, Belbroughton and Romsley, and Bromsgrove Centre. Question 16 provided a breakdown of the age ranges of the people who filled out the questionnaire. Members were asked to note that the vast majority were aged over 50.

The survey had asked respondents to rank the three most important services they felt the Council should invest in. In the feedback received, these had been:

- Local Economic Development and Employment (47.1 per cent of respondents).
- Community Safety (44.6 per cent of respondents).
- Maintenance of the Landscape and Environment (43.8 per cent of respondents)

In questions where respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with particular suggestions, six of those responses entailed well over 50 per cent agreeing or strongly agreeing. Only two had responses lower than 50 per cent - these being:

- Do you agree that the Council should invest more in our front-line services to cover increases in fuel? (At a 49.6% approval rate.)
- Do you support fees and charges (this excludes parking) rising by 4% to keep them in line with inflation and rising staffing costs? (At a 40.2% approval rate.)

The highest approval rating, at 86.2 per cent, was to the question - Do you agree that the Council should invest in economic development in order to support local businesses, start-ups, the town and local centres and to prioritise local skills?

Two further questions were asked about what level of increase to Bromsgrove District Council's proportion of Council Tax residents supported. The answers to this were:

- 61.5 per cent agreed or strongly agreed with a 1.99 per cent increase.
- This dropped to 45.8 per cent for a 2.99 per cent increase.

The survey had also included two free test questions:

- Please let us know your suggestions for investing in the district to increase prosperity and enhance appeal for residents and businesses alike.
 - There were 178 responses to this question.
 - Responses to this question provided many suggestions and comments regarding the District. The top three themes were Bromsgrove Town Centre, supporting businesses and the importance of infrastructure, from roads to public transport. These themes had many cross overs, from the impact of traffic, encouraging a diverse range of businesses into the town and reducing costs to visitors and businesses alike.
 - Suggestions included:
 - Reducing business rates / relief
 - Reducing parking costs
 - Supporting independent retailers
 - Bringing in key major retailers
 - Understanding the offer on the High Street. Some respondents had suggested that there were too many charity shops, cafes, hair and vaping businesses
 - Utilising empty shops for small businesses, new start-ups, housing and community use
 - Improving the market, in terms of the quality, offer and number of days that it was in operation
 - Making the town vibrant, attractive and distinctive, including by developing attractions and encouraging visitors
 - Improving the appearance and maintenance of the high street
 - Improving public transport
 - Supporting active travel
 - Accessing grants wherever possible
 - Ensuring a District-wide view
- Please let us know any other comments on the budget or ideas for reducing costs or increasing income to ensure Council services remain sustainable.
 - There were 118 responses to this question.
 - Of the responses to this question, the largest category fell into the theme of efficiency and value for money. Other themes included infrastructure, focusing on those in need, ensuring

transparency and accountability, asset utilisation, and the town centre.

○ Suggestions included:

- Reviewing salaries
- Ensuring there were the right skills within the Council
- Outsourcing some functions
- Exploring alternative methods of delivery (e.g. co-operatives, and partnerships)
- Reducing use of consultants
- Reviewing fees and charges
- Commercial opportunities (e.g. logs, compost or specific services)
- Turning off lights / utilising smart sensors
- Reducing events
- Promoting events better to increase revenue
- Community use of buildings
- Energy generation (e.g. solar panels in car parks)
- Converting buildings into housing (e.g. multi-storey by Asda)
- Increasing enforcement fines (e.g. fly tipping and littering)
- Supporting the voluntary sector
- Reducing business rates / relief
- Reviewing Council Tax
- Better coordination around highways and roadworks

In considering the feedback, Members were asked to note that there were some responses that had been received which indicated that some members of the public were not sure which services were provided by Bromsgrove District Council as opposed to Worcestershire County Council.

The consultation feedback had been considered at a recent meeting of the Finance and Budget Working Group. During the meeting, Members had noted that there had been a relatively high response rate from residents living in Alvechurch, compared to other areas. The suggestion was made that this had been due to work undertaken by the local Councillors to raise awareness and it was possible that lessons could be learned from this for other areas in the future.

Once the report had been presented, Members discussed the following points in detail:

- The response rate to the consultation, which compared favourably with previous consultation processes in respect of the Council's budget.
- The value of increasing the response rate in future to ensure that the feedback was more representative of a wider number of residents living in the District.

- The potential for the data in response to Question 33 to be provided at a Parish Council level. Officers undertook to investigate this matter further.
- The membership of the Bromsgrove Community Panel. Officers confirmed that this comprised approximately 500 local residents who had opted to be consulted on a regular basis by the Council.
- The businesses that were leasing shops in Bromsgrove town centre.
- The changing shopping habits of consumers in the twenty-first century and the need for the local economy to adapt.
- The potential for more pop-up shops to be introduced in the District.
- The advice that the Council's economic development team and the Town Centres Manager provided to local businesses.

Members concluded their discussions by thanking the Financial Services team for their hard work on preparing the MTFP.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) Members endorse the inputs into the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan as at the middle of October 2024, and the associated risks and opportunities.
- 2) An initial Tranche of savings proposals and pressures, as set out in Sections 3.03 to 3.14, including the fees and charges increases (non-commercial), after consideration of feedback from the consultation exercise which closed on the 2nd January 2025, is approved at Council.

The meeting closed at 8.01 p.m.

Chairman

Bromsgrove District Council - Budget Consultation for 2025/26

The budget consultation opened on Thu 5 December 2024. An email invite was sent to the Bromsgrove Community Panel. The survey was also promoted on a variety of social media channels.

The survey closed at 12noon on Thursday 2 January 2025. The response rate for the community panel was 48%. There were a total of 278 valid responses received.

Q no.	Question	Responses	Total Responses	%
Q1 (276)	Are you a resident of Bromsgrove District and/or have a business based here?	Resident of Bromsgrove District	276	100.0%
		Have a business based here	11	4.0%
Q2 (273)	Please tell us where you live or where your business is located. (Please note, if you live and have a business in the District, please only tell us where you live)	Alvechurch South	4	1.5%
		Alvechurch Village	9	3.3%
		Aston Fields	25	9.2%
		Avoncroft	8	2.9%
		Bart Green & Hopwood	5	1.8%
		Belbroughton and Romsley	24	8.8%
		Bromsgrove Central	27	9.9%
		Catshill North	7	2.6%
		Catshill South	4	1.5%
		Charford	13	4.8%
		Coffton	4	1.5%
		Drakes Cross	2	0.7%
		Hagley East	1	0.4%
		Hagley West	4	1.5%
		Hill Top	9	3.3%
		Hollywood	3	1.1%
		Lickey Hills	6	2.2%
		Lowes Hill	15	5.5%
		Marlbrook	11	4.0%
		Norton	11	4.0%
		Perryfields	7	2.6%
		Rock Hill	9	3.3%
		Rubery North	6	2.2%
Rubery South	5	1.8%		
Sanders Park	11	4.0%		
Sidemoor	16	5.9%		
Slideslow	10	3.7%		
Tardebigge	12	4.4%		
Wythall East	3	1.1%		
Wythall West	2	0.7%		
Q3 (276)	Which services do you think it is important for the Council to invest in? Please note that Highways are not included as this is a Worcestershire County Council function Please pick your top 3 most important.	Community and Voluntary Sector	39	14.1%
		Community Parks and Open Spaces	103	37.3%
		Community Safety	123	44.6%
		Environmental Sustainability	59	21.4%
		Events and Arts Activities	50	18.1%
		Local Economic Development and Employment	130	47.1%
		Maintenance of the Landscape and Environment	121	43.8%
		Strategic Housing	68	24.6%
		Waste and Recycling	108	39.1%
		Welfare and Financial Support	58	21.0%
		Q4 (276)	Do you agree that the Council should reinvest in technology in order to make services more secure, effective and efficient and to be digital by default?	Strongly agree
Agree	115			41.7%
Neither agree nor disagree	70			25.4%
Disagree	22			8.0%
Strongly disagree	7			2.5%
Q5 (275)	Do you agree that the Council should increase investment in temporary accommodation to support homeless families and individuals in district?	Strongly agree	60	21.8%
		Agree	100	36.4%
		Neither agree nor disagree	65	23.6%
		Disagree	30	10.9%
		Strongly disagree	20	7.3%
Q6 (276)	Do you agree that the Council should invest in economic development in order to support local businesses, start-ups, the town and local centres and to prioritise local skills?	Strongly agree	116	42.0%
		Agree	122	44.2%
		Neither agree nor disagree	32	11.6%
		Disagree	1	0.4%
		Strongly disagree	5	1.8%
Q7 (273)	Do you agree that the Council should be investing in a Bromsgrove Business Improvement District (BID) to bring extra focus into the Bromsgrove Town Centre offering?	Strongly agree	81	29.7%
		Agree	108	39.6%
		Neither agree nor disagree	58	21.2%
		Disagree	16	5.9%
		Strongly disagree	10	3.7%
Q8 (276)	Do you agree that the Council should invest more in our front-line services to cover increases in fuel?	Strongly agree	35	12.7%
		Agree	102	37.0%
		Neither agree nor disagree	115	41.7%
		Disagree	16	5.8%
		Strongly disagree	8	2.9%
Q9 (274)	Do you agree that the Council needs to involve young people more in decision making and local democracy?	Strongly agree	64	23.4%
		Agree	103	37.6%
		Neither agree nor disagree	71	25.9%
		Disagree	28	10.2%
		Strongly disagree	8	2.9%
Q10 (276)	Do you agree that the Council should invest in greater data and systems support to enable the delivery of improved services and enhance decision making?	Strongly agree	34	12.3%
		Agree	113	40.9%
		Neither agree nor disagree	98	35.5%
		Disagree	28	10.1%
		Strongly disagree	3	1.1%

Q11 (276)	Do you support fees and charges (this excludes parking) rising by 4% to keep them in line with inflation and rising staffing costs?	Strongly agree	21	7.6%
		Agree	90	32.6%
		Neither agree nor disagree	55	19.9%
		Disagree	67	24.3%
		Strongly disagree	43	15.6%
Q12	In order to maintain services, what level of increase to Bromsgrove District Council's proportion of Council Tax do you support?			
Q12a (218)	Increase of 1.99%	Strongly agree	54	24.8%
		Agree	80	36.7%
		Neither agree nor disagree	42	19.3%
		Disagree	20	9.2%
		Strongly disagree	22	10.1%
Q12b (190)	Increase of 2.99%	Strongly agree	38	20.0%
		Agree	49	25.8%
		Neither agree nor disagree	22	11.6%
		Disagree	29	15.3%
		Strongly disagree	52	27.4%
Q13 (178)	Please let us know your suggestions for investing in the District to increase prosperity and enhance appeal for residents and businesses alike.	This was an open question and the comments will be analysed separately		
Q14 (118)	Please let us know any other comments on the budget or ideas for reducing costs or increasing income to ensure Council services remain sustainable.	This was an open question and the comments will be analysed separately		
About You				
Answering these questions is optional. Any answers are completely anonymous and confidential. The reason why we ask you these questions is so we can:				
- Make our council services open to everyone in the district				
- Treat everyone fairly and appropriately when they use our services				
- In consultations, make sure that we have views from all across the district				
The Equality Act 2010 makes these aims part of our legal duties. Your answers help us check that we have met the law and help improve our services.				
Q15 (272)	What is your current housing status?	Owner	171	62.9%
		Mortgaged	68	25.0%
		Part rent/part buy	2	0.7%
		Private renting	7	2.6%
		Council tenant	6	2.2%
		Social housing	6	2.2%
		Living with relatives	3	1.1%
		Private renting	8	2.9%
		Other (please specify)	1	0.4%
Q16 (273)	Which of the following best describes your age?	16-19yrs	0	0.0%
		20-29yrs	3	1.1%
		30-39yrs	22	8.1%
		40-49yrs	27	9.9%
		50-59yrs	51	18.7%
		60-69yrs	75	27.5%
		70-79yrs	70	25.6%
		80+ years	14	5.1%
		Prefer not to say	11	4.0%
Q17 (273)	Do you have any long-standing health condition or disability? (The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as 'a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities')	Yes	72	26.4%
		No	177	64.8%
		Prefer not to say	24	8.8%
Q18 (274)	Which best describes your gender?	Female	123	44.9%
		Male	137	50.0%
		Prefer not to say	12	4.4%
		Other (please specify)	2	0.7%
Q20 (273)	Which best describes your ethnicity	White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British	245	89.7%
		Any other White background	6	2.2%
		Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	4	1.5%
		Asian or Asian British	1	0.4%
		Black, African, Caribbean or Black British Arab	0	0.0%
		Prefer not to say	15	5.5%
Q21 (272)	Which best describes your religion or belief?	Other ethnic group	2	0.7%
		Atheist	28	10.3%
		Buddhist	0	0.0%
		Christian	143	52.6%
		Humanist	9	3.3%
		Hindu	0	0.0%
		Jewish	0	0.0%
		Muslim	3	1.1%
		Pagan	7	2.6%
		Sikh	0	0.0%
		No religion/belief	50	18.4%
		Prefer not to say	26	9.6%
		Other (please specify)	6	2.2%
Q49 (270)	Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?	Bisexual	9	3.3%
		Heterosexual	217	80.4%
		Lesbian or Gay	6	2.2%
		Prefer not to say	35	13.0%
		Other (please specify)	6	2.2%