

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

22ND JULY 2025, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), S. T. Nock (Vice-Chairman), A. Bailes, R. Bailes, A. M. Dale, R. J. Hunter, B. Kumar, J. Robinson, J. D. Stanley and H. D. N. Warren-Clarke

Observers: Councillor K. May (Leader of the Council), Councillor S. Baxter (Deputy Leader of the Council)

Officers: Mr B. Watson, Mr. G. Revans, Mrs. R. Egan, Ms. L. Berry, Mr. D. Henderson, Ms. R. McElliott, Ms. M. Worsfold, and Mr. M. Sliwinski

17/25

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S. Robinson with Councillor J. Robinson in attendance as her named substitute.

18/25

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

There were no declarations of interest nor of party whip.

During consideration of this agenda item, a point of order was raised by a Member of the Committee. On the advice of officers, it was decided that the meeting be adjourned to seek advice of the Deputy Monitoring Officer in relation to this matter.

The meeting was adjourned between 6.06pm and 6.36pm. During this time, the Members concerned received advice on the matter from the Deputy Monitoring Officer.

Following the end of the adjournment, it was announced that the matter raised was not within the remit of Overview and Scrutiny Board and would be addressed through the correct process.

[Councillors R. Hunter and J. Robinson left the meeting following the end of the adjournment]

19/25

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 17TH JUNE 2025

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 17th June 2025 were considered.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 17th June 2025 be agreed as a true and correct record.

20/25

BROMSGROVE TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK - PRE-SCRUTINY

A strategic framework for Bromsgrove Town Centre was presented to Members which had been developed in collaboration with the portfolio holder and shaped through two stakeholder workshops. The framework aimed to consolidate various existing policies and plans into a unified vision for the town centre's future. It was designed to be inclusive and community-owned, rather than solely a Council initiative, to ensure resilience and relevance post Local Government Re-organisation (LGR).

The framework was grounded in placemaking principles and intended to guide regeneration activity, partnership engagement and investment priorities. It incorporated elements from the Bromsgrove Town 2040 Vision, Local Plan and regeneration projects funded through the Levelling-Up project.

Key strategic aims included the following:

- Transforming public spaces and connectivity
- Celebrating Bromsgrove's unique identity
- Enhancing town centre links and visitor access
- Building a safe and inclusive community
- Cultivating a thriving local business ecosystem
- Creating vibrancy to attract more visitors

The vision had been previously considered by Stakeholders and Members during various group activities to ensure all the aims and objectives were included.

An action plan encompassing the key strategic aims was to be developed under the oversight of a newly formed Town Centre Steering Group, comprising various stakeholders. This group would define Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), milestones, resource implications and explore the feasibility of establishing a Business Improvement District (BID). Progress would be monitored through an annual "State of the Town" health check which would link in with planning policies and quarterly reports would be provided as and where necessary.

During the meeting, Members raised several points which included the following:

- What health checks would be considered and how they would be graded? It was advised that the health checks would be assessed as part of the Council's planning policy framework

which would include baselines for footfall, vacancy rates, business support, rental values and other indicators. The Board were also encouraged to provide other health checks which they felt were important, for consideration.

- The importance of monitoring space usage in the town centre was highlighted.
- Clarity of the diversity of stakeholders involved in consultations was requested. In response Members were informed that representatives within different sectors across the town centre were considered during workshop sessions.
- Clarification on the enhanced town centre links and visitor access approval was requested. A timeline was proposed to establish the steering group by the end of Quarter 4 to draft an action plan. Members were also advised that existing work with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) on local cycling and walking improvements and public realm enhancements were underway.
- Concerns were expressed regarding aligning the strategy with the future LGR and that learning from other models should be a consideration. Officers suggested that the priority was to establish the Town Centre Steering Group, however, it was noted that leaving a legacy for the local people to be proud of was a key priority.
- Suggestions were made to produce a promotional video to communicate the vision to the public.
- The need to include town centre living within the strategy was emphasised to attract people of all ages, with proposals to encourage residential development above shops and within key sites. Members were advised that part of the action plan would include forwarding development plans within key site areas.
- It was suggested that the Town Centre Steering Group should consider having a Member included to provide relevant expertise and report back findings to the Board.
- The BID process was clarified which included the requirement for a successful ballot among fifty percent of the rateable value of businesses within a defined area. This bid would determine the chargeable business rates to local businesses and the revenue generated for the Council.

There were no recommendations raised during the meeting for Cabinet based on the content of the report.

RESOLVED that the Bromsgrove Town Centre Strategic Framework report be noted.

21/25

LOCAL HERITAGE ACTION LIST - QUARTERLY UPDATE

An update was provided on the Local Heritage Action List to the Board.

Following the adoption of the first tranche earlier in the year the following were noted:

- Property owners had been notified.
- The website had been updated.
- Development Management colleagues had been briefed on the local list and its implications for planning applications.
- A draft list for Wythall had been completed, with consultation planned post-Local Plan consultation completion.
- Work on Lickey and Blackwell and Bromsgrove continued but progress had slowed due to staff absences and departures. Engagement with Bromsgrove Society was ongoing.
- Public outreach efforts included a talk at Lickey End. Nomination forms would also be made available as part of the engagement process.

Concerns were raised regarding communication with stakeholders in Lickey and Blackwell. A Member noted a lack of engagement, despite previous contributions and requested to be included in correspondence. The Principal Conservation Officer reported that there had been email discussions with the Parish Council and nominations had been forwarded to the Conservation Team, however, it was agreed to provide the Councillor with the relevant communications directly.

Questions were also raised about the timeline for reviewing other areas such as Rubery. It was confirmed that all areas would be addressed alphabetically, although staffing constraints made it difficult to provide a definitive timeline.

RESOLVED that the Local Heritage Action List Quarterly Update be noted.

22/25

BROMSGROVE TOWN CENTRE RECYCLING BINS

The report on recycling and waste collection arrangements in Bromsgrove Town Centre was presented. The Environmental Services Manager noted that the report had been drafted to address a request from the Overview and Scrutiny Board raised in February 2025 for a review of the implications of no longer recycling waste on Bromsgrove High Street.

The Environmental Services Manager highlighted that the Place Teams audit of the town centre recycling bins had shown poor levels of adherence to the use of each bin, with the contents of recycling bins

showing that only one fifth of the entire waste collected in those bins was recyclable when sorting by hand was undertaken.

The difficulty in sorting recyclable material from these bins was exacerbated by the fact that many fast-food outlets provided food in card packaging and when people dispose of such waste, for example pizza boxes, in the recycling bins the high levels of grease on the packaging are tainting the whole bin. Items tainted with grease could not be recycled. Paper or card items contaminated with glass, whether dust particles or larger pieces also could not be recycled. The Council was not recycling any waste from Bromsgrove High Street bins at the moment because of the cross-contamination of waste.

Following the report, Members discussed how the investment in new recycling bins could address the problem of recycling rates and on Bromsgrove High Street. It was suggested that instead of using generic recycling bins separate receptacles for glass, metal, plastic, and general waste were needed, thereby separating waste at the point of disposal and, in combination with targeted signage and public awareness campaigns, optimise recycling within the Town Centre.

The Environmental Services Manager estimated that the cost of replacing the current bins on Bromsgrove High Street with the bins that have separate receptacles for glass could be circa £5,000. It was noted that to ensure effectiveness in increasing recycling rates, this investment would need to be combined with appropriate positioning of the bins within the Town Centre and continuing work on promoting correct recycling procedures

Use of smart bin technology could also be explored as smart bins tracked fill levels and allowed for optimisation of collection routes. It was noted that such bins were already in use, for example by Worcester City Council.

It was clarified that this report concerned recycling bins that were intended to be installed on the high street for public use only. All businesses had to follow regulations for commercial waste disposal and were not allowed to dispose of waste in public bins. A Member expressed a concern that commercial businesses could be depositing waste in public bins on Rubery High Street. The Officer agreed to contact Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) regarding this matter to identify if enforcement action was necessary.

A question was raised about provision of bins in other high streets across the District, such as Alvechurch, Barnt Green, and Rubery. It was responded that this report concerned the provision of recycling bins within Bromsgrove Town Centre which was a priority but following this the Officers would do an assessment and compile a full list of recycling bins required across the district centres with the view to provide a joint budget bid for these bins. It was commented that procuring the bins in

bulk across a number of district centres would provide economies of scale, subject to an available budget being identified and approved.

It was agreed by the Board that at this meeting, a recommendation be put forward to Cabinet asking that Officers proceed with preparing a budget bid with the view of investing in new (recycling) bins for installation in Bromsgrove Town Centre.

RECOMMENDED that the Officers proceed with preparing a budget bid to Cabinet to invest in new (recycling) bins for installation in Bromsgrove Town Centre.

23/25

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - MEMBERSHIP REPORT AND UPDATE

The Chairman of the Finance and Budget Working Group, Councillor P. McDonald, updated the Board on the recent meeting which took place on Thursday 17th July 2025.

The Chairman reported that the Quarter 4 Financial Outturn and Performance Monitoring Report was discussed, and Members of the Working Group had agreed that more detailed narrative was required in these reports going forward in order for Members and the public to better understand the content. Specific areas where further detail was felt to be needed was in respect of variances across service areas, information on the reasons for these variances and mitigations in place to ensure these were managed effectively. In addition, further information regarding the recharges made across both Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils during any financial year would also assist in better understanding the Council's financial position.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board discussed the points raised by Finance and Budget Working Group and a recommendation was put forward to the effect that a detailed narrative in terms of variance for each service area, together with detail on the action(s) being taken to address the variance/issue and the officer(s) responsible, be included in future iterations of quarterly finance and performance reports. In addition, the recommendation asked that information on recharge amounts be included in future reports. The Board agreed to making this recommendation to Cabinet.

Members also requested that the organisational chart be updated with up-to-date information in respect of officers' posts and contact details. This was agreed as an action to be completed by officers.

With respect to membership of the Finance and Budget Working Group, it was acknowledged that interest in joining the Working Group had been expressed by Councillors S. Ammar and C. Hotham to date. The Board felt that a follow up communication was required to members of the Overview and Scrutiny 'pool' (i.e. all elected members who were not represented on Cabinet) to ascertain if there were any further

expressions of interest. It was commented that this would ensure all elected members had time to consider on whether they wished to sit on the Working Group. In this case, it was agreed that consideration of further appointments to fill vacant positions on the Working Group be deferred to the next meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Board.

RECOMMENDED that future Quarterly Financial Outturn and Performance reports provide:

- i. a detailed narrative in terms of variance for each specific service area
- ii. for each area of high variance provide detail on the action(s) being taken to address the issue and the officer(s) responsible
- iii. information on recharge amounts.

24/25

TASK GROUP UPDATES

An update on the Housing Task Group was provided by its Chairman, Councillor H. Warren-Clarke. Councillor Warren-Clarke explained that bulk of the work had been completed, and the Task Group had one meeting left to formalise its recommendations. This meeting had had to be postponed on a couple of occasions, but it was expected that the Task Group would finalise and present its findings in the Autumn.

RESOLVED that Housing Task Group update be noted as per preamble above.

25/25

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

The Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) representative, Councillor B. Kumar, reported that the meeting scheduled for 9th July 2025 had been cancelled and re-scheduled to 30th July 2025. Therefore, there was no update to provide at this meeting.

RESOLVED that the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) update be noted.

26/25

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was presented for Members' consideration. Members requested that the following items from this work programme be added to the Overview and Scrutiny programme:

- Expansion of Commercial Waste Collection Service (due for consideration at the 9th September Overview and Scrutiny meeting)
- Expansion of Septic Tank and Emptying Service (due for consideration at the 9th September Overview and Scrutiny meeting)

- Homelessness Prevention Grant and Domestic Abuse Grant (due for consideration at the 18th November Overview and Scrutiny meeting).

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Work Programme items set out above be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

27/25

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was presented for Members' consideration. The items selected from the Cabinet Work Programme, at previous agenda item, were added to the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be updated as per preamble above.

28/25

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTION SHEET

The Overview and Scrutiny Action Sheet was considered by the Board.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Action sheet be noted.

29/25

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, 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.

30/25

TO CONSIDER, AND IF CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE, TO PASS THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING DURING THE CONSIDERATION OF ITEM(S) OF BUSINESS CONTAINING EXEMPT INFORMATION:-

RESOLVED: that under Section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of scheme 12A to the Act, as amended, the relevant paragraph of that part, in each case, being as set out below and that it is in the public interest to do so:-

Item No	Paragraph
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15	3
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31/25

LEVELLING UP FUND PROGRAMME - QUARTERLY UPDATE

The Regeneration Project Manager presented the Levelling Up Fund Programme projects update as follows:

- Windsor Street site: Ground water monitoring would continue to take place until mid-August 2025 with the results due to be submitted to the Environment Agency (EA). In the event ground water monitoring on site identified unacceptable levels of PFAS/PFOS (per and polyfluorinated alkyl substances), six-month of remediation would be undertaken, which would be due to conclude in January 2026.
- In general, the Windsor Street project remained on track to be completed by January 2026, meaning the site would be cleaned for redevelopment. The project was also within budget at present.
- Future use options paper for the Windsor Street site would be presented to Overview and Scrutiny in September 2025 and Cabinet in November 2025, asking Members to agree on how the site would be delivered for housing.
- Nailers Yard site: As reported at previous update to Overview and Scrutiny, there was a six-week delay to the project, incurred due to unforeseen ground obstructions.
- SCP Transport Planning had been tasked with undertaking the travel plan and welcome pack for the site, which was a planning condition that must be discharged prior to occupation.
- Members were advised that the wording of one of the planning conditions might need to be amended following the cancellation of Modeshift STARS subscription by Worcestershire County Council (WCC). Officers were awaiting information about the proposed change to how travel plans will be assessed.
- GJS Dillon were appointed to market the commercial building in December 2024, and would advertise the space and handle lettings on behalf of the Council.
- It was noted there had been early interest in the office and the food and beverage units at Nailers Yard.
- The project team was preparing to submit a full business case to Birmingham City Council (BCC) for access to the funds which the Council had deposited within the defunct Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) as part of the business rates pool arrangements. This fund totalled £2.425 million, and would be spent on Nailers Yard project once received. It was confirmed that the funds would not be received until 2026/27 financial year.

- The original budget for the Levelling Up programme was £16.103 million, made up of Levelling Up Fund (Government grant) and £1.6 million of funds from the Council, to be spent on the three projects (Nailers Yard, Windsor Street, Public Realm).
- Some additional funding of £1.08 million had been awarded and secured to Levelling Up projects in Bromsgrove since the original budget. In addition, it was planned to utilise the GBSLEP funding (not yet secured) of £2.425 million to the Levelling Up Programme.
- The final cost of the Levelling Up Programme was currently estimated at £18.65 million.

RESOLVED that the update on the progress of the Levelling Up Fund projects be noted.

(During consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed that included information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

The meeting closed at 7.56 p.m.

Chairman