

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

6TH JANUARY 2026, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), S. Ammar, A. Bailes, R. Bailes, A. M. Dale, D. J. A. Forsythe (Substitute), D. J. Nicholl (Substitute), S. A. Robinson, J. D. Stanley and H. D. N. Warren-Clarke

Observers: Councillor K. May – Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling Councillor S.J. Baxter – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Reorganisation and Climate Change
Councillor S.T. Nock – Cabinet Member for Finance
Councillor K. Taylor – Cabinet Member for Planning, WRS and Strategic Housing
Councillor S.R. Colella

Officers: Mr G. Revans, Ms R. Egan, Ms J. Willis, Mr M. Cox, Mr M. Eccles, Ms A. Delahunty, Ms R. McElliott, Mr C. Poole, Ms M. Worsfold and Mrs S. Woodfield

72/23

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor B. Kumar, with confirmation provided that Councillor D.J.A. Forsythe was attending as his named substitute.

Apology for absence was also received on behalf of Councillor J. Clarke, with confirmation provided that Councillor D.J. Nicholl was attending as the named substitute.

Apologies were also received from Councillor R.E. Lambert.

73/23

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

There were no declarations of interest nor of whipping arrangements.

74/23

APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Councillor A.M. Dale nominated herself for the position of Vice-Chairman which was seconded by Councillor S. Ammar. On being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED that Councillor A.M. Dale be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Board for the ensuing municipal year.

75/23

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 18TH NOVEMBER 2025

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 18th November 2025 were considered by the Board.

A Member requested that an update for Churchfields Car Park should be added to the work programme for the Board's consideration. However, Officers advised that the February report for Town Centre Parking would include the Churchfields Car Park, which was deemed as acceptable by the Board.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 18th November 2025 be approved as a correct record.

76/23

BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Climate Change Manager outlined the statutory requirements under the Environment Act 2021 for all public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Members noted that the Council was legally required to publish a Biodiversity Duty Report by March 2026.

The following key actions which had been completed included:

- Green Flag Awards for Sanders Park and Lickey End Recreation Ground.
- Grass verge biodiversity initiative.
- Tree planting programme (target of 100,000 trees over 15 years).
- Pesticide reduction and alternative weed control.
- Integration of biodiversity monitoring into the Climate Change Strategy.
- Compliance with Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) monitoring for planning applications.

Member comments and discussions were as follows:

- Concerns were raised that targets were vague and lacked measurable outcomes. In response Officers agreed that these would be included for future reporting.
- Meaningful tree planting targets should be included in reporting which was agreed would be reviewed.
- Concerns were raised regarding biodiversity net gain, given the scale of housing development for future local plan requirements by Central Government. Members were advised that finding the relevant expertise to carry out the monitoring was a challenge. The Portfolio Holder agreed that an action plan was in progress to

review the Council's expectations on how the requirements would be implemented.

- The responsibility for monitoring biodiversity on Council owned land should include a timeline and SMART objectives.
- An explanation was provided to the Board on "Citizen Science" initiatives using the iNaturalist app.
- Consideration of risk management and resource implications was also requested for future reporting. In response Officers explained that as this was a new strategy, steps would be put in place for future reporting with considerations also to include the Local Government Reform (LGR) implications. The Executive Director reassured Members that work was being carried out to consider resource pressures for the Council.

RECOMMENDED that

The Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that:-

- 1) The findings of the Biodiversity Duty First Consideration Report be noted; and
- 2) Members agree to publish the full Biodiversity Duty First Consideration Report to the Council's website.

77/23

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION, ROUGH SLEEPER AND DOMESTIC ABUSE GRANTS FUNDING 2027/28 AND 2028/29 - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Strategic Housing Officer reported on the three-year Government grant for homelessness prevention, rough sleeper outreach and domestic abuse services. The funding was more generous than anticipated, allowing for stability and potential expansion of services.

A summary of proposals was highlighted as follows:

- Confirmation of three-year funding for existing providers.
- Removal of temporary accommodation funding from this grant (covered by separate revenue funding).
- Government targets were to reduce rough sleeping by fifty percent and reduce families in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Member comments and discussions were as follows:

- Whether amalgamated funding made services flexible? In response Officers expressed the view that the amalgamated funding was less flexible for temporary accommodation, however, this had been offset by increased funding.
- Why there had been underspending on crucial services? It was explained that this was due to the unexpected uplift in funding from Government, therefore, reporting for existing services only form part of this report and that a further report in respect of the

surplus funding for 2027/28 would be brought to Members in November 2026 and for 2028/29 surplus would be brought to Members in November 2027.

- Clarity for the process of monitoring and auditing grant funded services was sought by the Board. The Strategic Housing Officer explained that quarterly performance monitoring reports were a requirement, with confirmation of expenditure signed off in line with internal audit requirements.
- Clarity on the role of the part time Empty Homes Officer was explained to the Board as an initiative to work with owners of properties which had been empty for over a year. This was aimed to put properties back into use to assist with the lack of housing stock within the District and would be carried out by an existing part time officer, increasing their hours.
- Discussions were also raised regarding the increase in demand from out of area cases and pressures on temporary accommodation. Members were informed that the full rehousing duty only related to those with a priority need which included victims/survivors of domestic abuse and those with mental health issues. It was explained that demand for accommodation was a growing concern within the District but the Council's supply of accommodation becoming available had decreased.
- Further clarity on the BDHT Sunrise Project intensive support was also discussed with Members as requested. It was explained that this was a non-tenure specific, integrated support service for vulnerable residents.

RECOMMENDED that

The Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that:-

- 1) The initiatives in 4.5 be approved to receive the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Grant and Domestic Abuse Grant allocations of funding for 2027/28 and 2028/29, subject to satisfactory performance; with any uplift and additional initiatives being implemented prior to that period to be the subject of a further report to the Cabinet; and
- 2) Delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing, to use any unallocated grant from this source of grant funding during the year or make further adjustments and uplifts as necessary to ensure full utilisation of the grants, including any mid year Homelessness Prevention Grant top up, for 2027/28 and 2028/29 in support of existing or new schemes.

PARTICULATE MONITORING - PRE-SCRUTINY

The Technical Services Manager presented options for additional particulate matter monitoring following a council motion. Current

provision included three low-cost sensors in the Bromsgrove District. The proposed options ranged from extending existing sensors to commissioning a source apportionment study with the University of Birmingham.

The recommended option e included a combination of extended sensors and a mobile “super site” study with an estimated cost of £150,000.

After the presentation, Members raised the following comments and discussions:

- If there were grant funding opportunities from Central Government? Members were advised that there was no current government funding available which had been withdrawn in 2024.
- Further explanations were requested on the cost implications for the recommended option shown within the report. Officers provided clarity that the monies would be used for the purchasing of the necessary equipment, servicing and maintenance.
- Was there a potential liability/risk if the Council did not push forward with the proposals? Clarification was provided that the overall responsibility for particulate matter reduction lay with Central Government but was an opportunity for the Council to review in more detail at the levels within the District.
- If there were opportunities for Section 106 money contributions, taking legacy benefits into consideration? In response Officers explained that the suggestion would require a change in policy. The Leader of the Council added that it was important that there was no delay in progressing the works which had already been agreed at the Cabinet Working Group and was an essential requirement for residents within the District.
- Members noted public health implications and reputational benefits of proactive monitoring.
- The Chairman expressed the view that the wording in the report regarding the electrification of the vehicle fleet was misleading. Clarity was also provided on the electrification of vehicles which would see brake emissions fall, while tyre emissions were expected to rise.
- There was a recommendation suggested from a Member to seek monies from the Legacy Budget. However, the Leader explained that the monies allocated were required for other significant challenges faced by the Council.

RECOMMENDED that

The Cabinet RECOMMEND that:-

- 1) Additional monitoring of Particulate Matter (air pollution) be delivered as set out in Option E below (3.5); and
- 2) A further report be brought back to Cabinet once final costs have been identified.

79/23

LEVELLING UP FUND PROGRAMME (QUARTERLY UPDATE)

The Regeneration Project Delivery Manager updated the Board on the levelling up fund Windsor Street and Nailer's Yard projects.

The following key points were raised:

Windsor Street:

- a) Phase Two remediation required six months for treatment and six months for monitoring works.
- b) Cabinet had agreed the site redevelopment for housing via partnership with a Registered Social Landlord (RSL).

Nailer's Yard:

- a) Construction was progressing with completion expected in May 2026.
- b) Bruton Knowles had been appointed as property management agent for the commercial building.
- c) The Pavilion building operational model was under review.

Members questions and comments were as follows:

Windsor Street:

- What were the timeframe and costs for the groundwater treatment options as suggested feedback from Environment Agency (EA)? Officers explained the timeframe for Phase One and Phase Two as detailed in the report and reassured Members that although works would take six months for treatment works and six months for monitoring, there would be continuing progression with the project in other areas, such as applying for planning permission. Members were also advised that the works would be within budget for Phase Two remediation works.
- Members requested that the Board be included in updates for the RSL options, prior to Cabinet considerations. Further discussions were also raised that considerations for a local provider may be more beneficial for residents, particularly when reporting issues. In response the Executive Director explained that the options for selecting the suitable contractor was in progress, however, local needs would be a consideration.

Nailers Yard Site:

- Members noted that property agents Bruton Knowles had been appointed to undertake the property management of the commercial building but requested clarity on who would manage the Pavilion Buildings. In response the Board was advised that an operational model was being put in place to explore options

such as managing inhouse and considerations for third party involvement.

- Concerns were raised that GJS Dillon were continuing to receive enquiries for the commercial building, but no tangible lettings had been received. It was explained that due to delays in appointing Bruton Knowles, there had been some delays with progression, however, Officers were hopeful that an update could be provided at the next meeting in February 2026.
- An update with regards to progression with the release of the restrictive covenant was also requested by Members. It was explained by the Leader that conversations were in progress to escalate the matter and that an update would be provided to the Board. Further discussions continued with Members suggesting that delays with the progress of the covenant release and operational management of the Pavilion should be included as a risk to the Council which was noted by Officers.
- Members also requested an update on progress for the culvert works and costs associated for the project. Officers informed the Board that works to the culvert were progressing as per the current programme for 4th May 2026 completion. Weather conditions may lead to delays due to the works being carried out in the winter. The Project Manager explained that one complaint had been received from a local resident about the noise from the pumps but this was now resolved with Kier installing acoustic fencing.

The Leader and Officers concluded discussions and were pleased to inform the Board that a representative from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had visited the Windsor Street and Nailers Yard site. The representative provided positive feedback, noting that the works were progressing well and highlighted that having a set completion date was a significant achievement when comparing progress made by other Local Authorities.

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

80/23

LOCAL HERITAGE ACTION LIST (QUARTERLY UPDATE)

The Principal Conservation Officer presented progress of the Local Heritage Action Lists to the Board.

The key points raised were as follows:

- Four parishes had adopted local heritage lists.
- The Bromsgrove draft list was expected mid-January 2026.
- Recruitment was underway for full time Conservation Officer who was due to start in March 2026.
- There had been an increase in development management workload.

Following the update, Members raised concerns about delays and the potential disadvantages to areas without local heritage listings being established. However, Officers reassured Members that non designated heritage assets were considered and would be picked up during the planning decision stage.

During discussions concerning the lack of resources to work on the lists and the recruitment of consultants, it was queried if additional consultancy would also be sourced for the impending increase in workload for the Local Plan. The Executive Director advised that work capacity was being reviewed by Senior Officers.

RESOLVED that the update on the progress of the Local Heritage Action List be noted.

81/23

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

The Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) representative, Councillor B. Kumar had sent his apologies to the Board for the meeting. It was agreed that any queries, following consideration of the update provided and included in the agenda, would be deferred to the next meeting held in February 2026.

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

82/23

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - MEMBERSHIP REPORT AND UPDATE

After consideration of the Finance and Budget Working Group Membership report and terms of reference the board agreed to the proposed membership of the working group for the 2025/26 municipal year.

RESOLVED that the Finance and Budget Working Group Membership Report be noted.

83/23

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

Following consideration of the Cabinet Work Programme, Members requested and it was agreed that the inclusion of the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) findings report would be added to the Cabinet Work Programme.

RESOLVED that the content of the Cabinet Work Programme be noted as per the preamble above.

84/23

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme was considered by Members.

The following discussions were raised:

- Capacity of the Minor Works Team – The Chairman expressed his frustration at the lack of progress regarding his request for a report to consider the capacity of the Minor Works Teams. It was agreed that a meeting would be set up to discuss relevant details further with the Leader, Chairman of the Board and relevant Officers.
- Local Government Reform (LGR) - Regular updates was requested for the Boards' consideration which was noted by Officers.

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

85/23

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTION SHEET

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

Frustrations were raised by the Chairman regarding delays in progression for the update on Electric Vehicle (EV) Charger profit sharing arrangement negotiations. Members noted that a meeting had been held with the Leader and relevant Officers to discuss progression. Members noted that a briefing paper would be provided to Members of the Board at the next meeting to be held in February 2026.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Action Sheet be noted.

86/23

TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR 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.

The meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.

Chairman