

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

14TH APRIL 2026, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Observers:

Councillor K. J. 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 P.J. Whittaker - Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Community Safety
Councillor M. Marshall

Officers: Mr. G. Revans, Ms H. Corredor, Ms R. Egan, Mr. M. Bough, Mr M. Cox, Ms R. McElliott, Ms. T. Ainscough, Ms. K. Sharp-Fisher, Ms. M. Worsfold and Mrs S. Woodfield

Other parties: Mr R. Church (Representative on behalf of Applied Resilience)

113/25

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence was received from Councillor R.E. Lambert.

114/25

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

There were no declarations of interest nor of whipping arrangements.

115/25

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 24TH MARCH 2026

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 24th March 2026 were considered by the Board.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 24th March 2026 be approved as a correct record.

116/25

HEATWAVES PREPAREDNESS - YEARLY UPDATE

The representative from Applied Resilience provided an annual update on heatwave preparedness, explaining the Council's role within the Worcestershire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and participation in the Adverse Weather Planning Group.

The key points included:

- The Council participated in the Local Resilience Forum and was represented on the Adverse Weather Planning Group.
- Community venues, including council buildings, libraries and selected church buildings were identified as potential cool spaces, although these were not formally promoted due to safeguarding and security concerns.
- Vulnerable residents were encouraged to register with the utility providers' Priority Services Registers, which allowed additional support during utility disruptions.
- All Council services had up-to-date business continuity plans.
- A roster of trained officers was maintained to respond to emergencies.
- During heatwave events, the UK Health Security Agency would act as the lead body, with the Council reinforcing national messaging through local communications.

After the presentation the Board carried out the following key discussions:

Priority Services Register (PSR)

- Whether data was available of the number of residents registered on the PSR for the District? – In response it was advised that a search could not be defined by District/Borough due to there being no defined boundary line, however a search could be defined by area.
- If staff were adequately trained in this field of work for the PSR? – In response Members were advised that this field of work was adequately resourced with duty response officers available as part of the service to assist residents and staff were also available at Bromsgrove and Redditch Day Centres.

Cool Hubs

- Members requested progress for seeking the use of cool hub spaces within the Church of England (COE) venues and queried if blank spot areas could be provided. – The Board were advised that all COEs had been contacted within the District but unfortunately there had been a lack of response. It was explained also that these areas could not be publicly advertised, due to safeguarding concerns.

- If leisure centres (not owned by the Council) could also be possible cooling hub areas and if blank spot areas could be provided to Members? – In response it was acknowledged that access to cool spaces remained challenging, particularly in rural areas and that further engagement with partners such as rest centres and supermarkets was being explored and could possibly be used if in a Red Alert situation.
- Members queried the use of libraries, particularly difficulties faced for the public who were not members. – In response Members were advised that Worcester County Council (WCC) had been instructed to allow the public into libraries during Amber/Red warning alerts.
- Questions were also raised regarding excess heat related deaths nationally and if the reports were correctly reflective. - Officers acknowledged the recent UKHSA data and advised the Board that local impacts appeared lower, possibly reflecting effective community based resilience measures.

RESOLVED that the Heatwaves Preparedness yearly update be noted.

117/25

ENVIROCRIME (TO INCLUDE ENVIRONMENT CRIME UPDATE, ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME ENFORCEMENT POLICY AND LITTERING FROM VEHICLES)

Officers from Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) outlined enforcement activity since June 2024, covering fly tipping, littering, dog fouling and untidy land, with an increase in staffing to 1.5 full time equivalent (FTE) to support Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) when WRS took over the service delivery.

The key points included:

- Since June 2024, WRS had undertaken environmental enforcement on behalf of the Council.
- Fly tipping volumes in Bromsgrove were high compared to other districts.
- Successful enforcement relied heavily on gathering admissible evidence.
- Intelligence led approaches were used to identify hotspots and repeat offenders.
- A proposal was put forward to adopt the WRS Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy.
- Approval was sought to allow Civil Enforcement Officers to issue littering penalties from vehicles.

After discussions, Members raised the following questions:

Environmental Crime Update

- Dog fouling offences reported for investigation were discussed. Members requested clarity on the reported offences for dog fouling within the District. – The standard procedures were explained to Members which included firstly establishing if the complaint was an offence, followed by an initial warning to the perpetrator, and then escalation through a Community Protection Warning (CPW), Penalty Charge Notice (PCN), Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN), followed by possible court proceedings.
- Clarification was sought for the extra resource increase of .5 FTE to cover the BDC area and if this would be sufficient to cover the role? – Members were informed that the extra resource had been operating since June 2024, which was predominantly being used to assist with review of camera footage, associated intelligence checks and to also administer enforcement files. Members noted that the team were working as hard as they could with the resource available.

Littering from vehicles

- If there were other local authorities carrying out similar civil enforcement action to compare work productivity? – Members noted Wychavon District Council were carrying out similar enforcement action and it was agreed that Officers would seek their expertise in this field of work.
- If Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) could be used if the offence had not been witnessed by a Civil Enforcement Officer? – Members noted that evidence from CCTV and evidence from members of the public could be used if the claims were supported by witness statements. Members were also advised that the Team were using vehicle registration numbers as another approach to gain evidence.
- What was defined as a hotspot, could cameras be used in these particular areas and what were the costs? – It was advised that hotspots were identified by volume, severity and patterns of offending and camera deployment was limited by theft and technical constraints. Therefore, cameras were deployed selectively due to cost, theft risk and technical limitations.
- If an update could be provided on the number of fly tips reported since January 2026 as reported? – Members noted numbers were high due to the impact of littering issues in neighbouring District, particularly within the Birmingham City area, however, Officers were liaising with Birmingham City Council to tackle these issues. Members also noted that trying to track down individuals was becoming increasingly difficult, as offenders were learning new ways to avoid detection.
- Members discussed and queried the links between organised crime and fly tipping. – Members were advised that fly tipping was increasingly linked to organised criminal activity and required an intelligence led approach to identify offenders, which was a lengthy process. Members noted the need to raise public awareness of these organised crimes and their impact. It was

also highlighted that the individual who owned the waste was ultimately responsible for its disposal. Residents were advised to verify waste carriers via the Environment Agency register or the Council website.

- If recycling centre access restrictions were contributing to fly tipping? - It was advised that there was no clear evidence which currently linked fly tipping directly to recycling centre restrictions.

RESOLVED that the Envirocrime Update be noted.

118/25

LOCAL HERITAGE ACTION LIST - QUARTERLY UPDATE

Progress on the Local Heritage Action List Quarterly Update was provided to Members.

The following key points were considered:

- Draft Local Heritage Lists had been produced for several parish areas.
- Recruitment difficulties had delayed progress, although a vacant Conservation Officer post had been filled.
- External consultancy support had been used to maintain progress.

After consideration of the presentation Members asked when non parished areas would be covered. Officers explained that work would progress sequentially subject to resources. Questions were also raised regarding recruitment difficulties. Officers confirmed posts had required re advertisement due to skills shortages.

RESOLVED that the Local Heritage Action Quarterly Update be noted.

119/25

PERMISSION TO REVOKE THE FIRST HOMES POLICY

This was not considered by the Board as the item had been deferred.

120/25

RENTERS RIGHTS ACT 2025

The Private Sector Housing Officer presented a comprehensive update on the Renters' Rights Act. Members were informed that The Act represented the most significant reform of the private rented sector in decades. The act also expanded the Local Authorities enforcement duty from property conditions to tenancy regulation and consumer protection.

The 3 implemented phases were highlighted were as follows:

Phase 1

- The Section 21 "no fault" evictions would be abolished.
- Would provide greater protection for both parties.
- No fixed tenancy period.

- Rent increases would be limited to once per year.
- Discrimination against tenants with children or on benefits would be prohibited.
- Landlords would be required to register properties on a national database.
- Consideration rights for tenants to request a pet.
- Enhanced enforcement powers had been granted to Local Authorities.

Phase 2

- All landlords were permitted to register their properties on the National Private Rented Sector Database (PRS)
- The Landlord Ombudsman dealt with tenancies due to end and disputes.

Phase 3

- Introduction of the Decent Homes Standard in the private sector for the first time.
- Proposals on Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards being a C rated or above.
- Extend Awaabs law into the Private Rented Sector.

Member questions and officer responses were as follows:

A query was raised whether there was adequate proactive engagement with tenants and landlords to provide advice on specific issues within the District, with a Member suggesting “pop up” events. Officers advised that national guidance and future databases would improve local targeting and there was also work set to provide information on the Council’s website. Communications and relevant training would also be provided to the social housing providers within the District. Officers were encouraged by the “pop up” suggestion which would be looked into further as a possible engagement method.

Questions were also raised about antisocial behaviour and landlord powers. Officers confirmed that possession grounds had been expanded but complexities remained.

RESOLVED that the Renters Rights Act 2025 be noted.

121/25

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION (LGR) UPDATE

The Assistant Director for Corporate Services and Transformation provided a detailed update on LGR, including refreshed Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) guidance and recent national announcements.

Members were advised on the following:

- National announcements regarding approved unitary proposals elsewhere.
- Expected transition arrangements, including joint committees, shadow authorities and vesting day.
- Funding available for transition and implementation.
- Establishment of additional workstreams, including communications and data.
- The proposal to establish a single county wide data hub to support decision making.

After the presentation, Members discussed the following:

- Members queried the Data Hub Workstreams costs and lessons learnt from Cumbria Council, particularly in relation to disaggregation. – In response Members were informed that Cumbria had moved to a two unitary authority, disaggregating social services and therefore provided potentially helpful insights into this process. Officers also highlighted that work was being focused on preparation and data collection, with more detailed modelling dependent on Government decisions.
- The Board also requested when there would likely to be a boundary review for the number of Members required for a specific ward? – In response it was explained that the specifics would be dependent on county divisions in the first instance.
- Members requested clarity on scrutiny arrangements during the shadow period. – It was advised that existing councils were likely to continue for an additional year subject to legislation.
- Clarity on risks relating to education funding and adult social care were also discussed by the Board. – Members were advised that the Council would need to review the budget requirements and grant funding availability, therefore, the Data Hub would be a good tool to assist with data collection. The Leader also reminded Members of the Baroness Casey review which would be addressing adult social care requirements.

RESOLVED that the LGR Update be noted.

122/25

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2026-26

The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2025/26 was considered by the Board.

References to live streaming within the report were discussed. Members agreed that scrutiny meetings should explore live streaming where possible.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2025/26 be noted.

123/25

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chair of the Finance and Budget Working Group provided a verbal update. Members were advised that the Group had considered the Community Investment Fund. Recommendations included increasing cross-party representation on the assessment panel, introducing an appeals process, ensuring Ward Members were consulted on projects in their wards and requiring Ward Member sponsorship for externally proposed projects.

RESOLVED that the Finance and Budget Working Group update be noted.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that

- 1) Any projects put forward by BDC must have the approval of the Ward Member. In addition, BDC departments help and assist Ward Members with any projects they may put forward;
- 2) That the Panel be cross-party;
- 3) If Ward Members feel they cannot sponsor a project, then it cannot go ahead; and
- 4) Consideration should be given to an appeal process.

124/25

HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (HOSC) UPDATE

There was no update provided for this item as the HOSC meeting was due to take place on 27th April 2026.

125/25

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was presented for Members' consideration.

During discussions on the Levelling Up Fund Programme update, a Member requested that the Windsor Street Delivery Options Paper be scrutinised by the Board, which had been requested at the previous Board meetings. It was agreed that this would be added to the Board's work programme along with the Bromsgrove Car Park report.

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

126/25

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

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

Discussions were raised regarding previous considerations to establish an LGR Task Group. It was agreed that the terms of reference and membership would be established through the Board at its next meeting in June.

The Leader of the Council also informed Members that the Board would receive a Police and Crime Panel update briefing paper, following scheduled panel meetings.

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

127/25 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTION SHEET**

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

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Action Sheet be noted as per the preamble above.

128/25 **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.

129/25 **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:-

| <u>Minute Item No</u> | <u>Paragraph</u> |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 130/25 | 3 |

130/25 **LEVELLING-UP FUND PROGRAMME (QUARTERLY UPDATE)**

The Levelling Up Fund Programme Quarterly Update was presented to Members.

Progress continued for the Bromsgrove Town Centre regeneration projects. Windsor Street remediation had entered Phase 2, with works delayed and would commence in May 2026 and completion expected by July 2027. The Nailers Yard construction was advancing, albeit with some delays linked to Section 278 approvals. Overall programme

funding remained secure, with a small Windsor Street overspend to be met from contingency. Cabinet engagement on future delivery and partnership models was ongoing. The completion of the agreement for the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) funding was progressing well.

After the presentation, Members raised the following questions:

Windsor Street

- Frustrations were expressed by Members due to the further delays for Phase 2 works, delaying completion, with an expected date of July 2027.
- Further clarification was requested for the works relating to the monitoring of remediation works by the Environment Agency (EA)? – In response Members were informed that if levels of contamination were high for the barrier injection works then further monitoring would be required.
- Clarity on the Phase 2 works which would result in a project overspend of approximately £74k funded by the Levelling-Up Fund (LUF) programme contingency budget? – The Board were informed that this would be covered by the additional contingency allowance agreed as an urgent decision which was taken back in August 2025.

Nailers Yard

- When was the Public Realm work likely to commence? – It was advised that there was a 10-week delay, however, works were in progress to mitigate risks for delays envisaged.
- A three-week delay for the culvert works, which would result in a loss and expense claim by Keir due to heavy rainfall was raised with Members. Querying why this had not been raised when reviewing the contract from Keir, which should be common practice to mitigate such risks. – In response Officers confirmed that the Council was liable for costs due to poor weather conditions.
- Members raised the lack of interest in the soft market testing exercise for the Pavilion building and queried if the single response from Rubicon Leisure Limited was best value for money (VFM). – Officers reassured Members that the two-week soft market testing exercise had been carried out through the correct procurement process, with only one bidder response based on the drafted scope put forward. Officers and the Leader reassured Members that Rubicon Leisure Limited had the relevant expertise, operating similar facilities elsewhere and would be a good opportunity for the Council.

General discussions

- Members requested that liability costings be tabled for the next quarter reporting, which was agreed by Officers.

RESOLVED that the Levelling Up Fund Programme Quarterly Update be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.57 p.m.

Chairman