

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

21ST JANUARY 2026, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Officers: Mr J. Leach, Mr. G. Revans, Mrs. C. Felton, D Goodall and Mrs J. Gresham

78\25 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Hopkins and D. Nicholl.

79\25 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor H. Jones declared a Pecuniary Interest in respect of Agenda Item 16 – Motions on Notice in that she was employed by the Member of Parliament for Bromsgrove.

Councillors S. Baxter, D. Forsythe and S. Peters declared an Other Disclosable Interest in respect of Agenda item 10 – Wythall Neighbourhood Plan as a member of Wythall Parish Council who had paid for the preparation of the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan.

The Members did not leave the meeting room during the consideration of these items and took part on the vote thereon.

[In respect of the preamble above, Councillor H. Jones left the meeting prior to the vote on Agenda Item 16 – Motions on Notice].

80\25 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 19TH NOVEMBER 2025**

The minutes from the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 19th November 2025 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes from the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 19th November 2025 be approved as a true and accurate record.

81\25

TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Chairman announced and congratulations were offered to the four community champions from Bromsgrove who had been awarded honours in the New Years' Honours List. The champions were as follows:

1. Victoria Wells OBE
2. Thomas Clarke-Forrest MBE
3. Wendy Latty BEM
4. Sabhijinder Singh Hayer (Sam) BEM

The Chairman was also saddened to announce that former Councillor Glenys Blackmoor has recently passed away. Councillor P. McDonald was invited to say a few words on behalf of the Labour Group. In doing so, it was noted that Glenys was a devoted Parish Councillor who served for twenty years. She was dedicated to improving the lives of others and had community spirit and an unwavering belief in public service. Former Councillor Blackmoor was passionate about saving the planet and cycled to all Council meetings. Details of the funeral arrangements were provided should any Members wish to attend.

The Chairman noted that all Members paid their respects to former Councillor Blackmoor's family and friends at this sad time.

There were no announcements from the Head of Paid Service in this occasion.

82\25

TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

The Leader announced that Ms. J. Lorraine had been appointed as Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer to the Council. Ms. Lorraine could not be in attendance for this meeting due to a prior engagement.

83\25

TO RECEIVE COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (TO FOLLOW)

Two members of the public had submitted a question for this meeting.

Ms. Trigg was in attendance (on Microsoft Teams) and asked the following question:

"What plans do you have to deal with the immediate Speculative Planning Applications already received outside of the Local Plan Consultation process and those that will likely be received over the coming weeks to ensure that the public is not vulnerable to unsustainable development outside the Local Plan consultation option that has only just closed and for which this Council hasn't published any response to it yet?"

The Local Planning Authority (LPA) was bound to determine planning applications in line with the development plan policies unless material considerations indicated otherwise. The emerging Local Plan update was not sufficiently progressed to carry any significant weight in the decision-making process. Therefore, the Bromsgrove District Plan (2017) provided the adopted development plan for consideration.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was a significant material consideration in determining planning applications. It emphasised that significant weight should be attached to the NPPF when making decisions, as it outlines the government's planning policies for England and guides how these should be applied. The NPPF aims to contribute to sustainable development, ensuring that planning policies reflect the government's commitment to economic growth, social objectives, and environmental considerations.

To be clear, material considerations concern the use and development of land in the public interest, and not to private considerations such as the applicant's personal conduct, covenants or property values. Each case is determined on its own merits.

It was reported that the second question had been submitted by Ms K. Van der Plank, who was not able to attend the meeting. It had been agreed prior to the meeting that a written response be provided. The Monitoring Officer read the question for Members' information. It read as follows:

"Could the Council please outline any measures that are being implemented to ensure all public venues and licensed premises within the District comply with Health and Safety Regulations".

84\25

URGENT DECISIONS

The Chairman informed Council that had been one Urgent Decision taken since the previous meeting of Council relating to the appointment of an Interim Section 151 Officer.

There was a request made that the names of those who approved Urgent Decisions be included in the published documents in the future in order to provide transparency for members of the public who were not aware of the names of Members and Officers involved in the process. The Chairman stated that the Urgent Decisions were included on the Council's website and if the names were not already included then this would be looked at for the future.

Members took the opportunity to thank the Assistant Director of Finance and Customer Services for her hard work prior to the appointment of an Interim Section 151 Officer.

85\25

CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Chairman invited Members to provide an update in respect of substitute Members on the Overview and Scrutiny Board for the remainder of the municipal year.

In doing so, it was noted that the substitute for Councillor J. Clarke was Councillor D. Nicholl and that Councillor D. Forsythe would be the substitute for Conservative Group Members on the Board.

86\25

INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL 2026/27

The Leader presented the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) 2026/27 report for consideration by Council and thanked the IRP for the work undertaken in preparing the report.

In addition to the five recommendations made by the IRP there were three additional recommendations which proposed the following:

1. A Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) using the multiplier of 0.03 of the basic allowance be introduced for payments to Vice-Chairman of Committees on a per meeting basis where Members were required to act in the absence of the Chairman of that particular Committee. This was based on parity of arrangements already in place for the Chairman of the Electoral Matters Committee

2. A Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) using the multiplier of 0.03 of the basic allowance be introduced for payments to the Chairman of Licensing Sub-Committee hearings.
3. That the SRA of the Chairman of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee be aligned with the Chairman of the Licensing Committee (approximately £35 per annum).

It was explained that given the relatively small multiplier being proposed to these new SRAs, it was not anticipated that the proposed recommendations 1 and 2 as detailed above would exceed £2,000 additional funding into the budget.

Following the presentation of the report and the additional recommendations Members expressed that they were pleased with the additional SRAs as detailed above, particularly as this had been suggested previously. In particular the additional SRA for the Chairman of Audit, Standards and Governance Committee given its importance for the Council.

Some Members expressed that they had been disappointed with some of the communications from members of the IRP. In addition to this it was noted that the panel seemed unbalanced in terms of Trade Union representation. It was important to recognise that currently there was not enough of an incentive for new Councillors to stand in elections as the remuneration did not reflect the amount of time Councillors spent executing their Council duties.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor K. May and seconded by Councillor S. Baxter.

RESOLVED that

- 1) a Basic Allowance for 2026/27 of £6,095, representing a 4.62% increase from the previous year's recommendations be approved.**
- 2) a range of Special Responsibility Allowances as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.**
- 3) travel allowances for 2026/27 continue to be paid in accordance with the HMRC mileage allowance be approved.**
- 4) subsistence allowances for 2026/27 remain unchanged.**

- 5) the Dependent Carer's Allowance remains unchanged.**
- 6) a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) using the multiplier of 0.03 of the basic allowance for payments to Vice-Chairman of Committees on a per meeting basis where Members were required to act in the absence of the Chairman of that particular Committee. This was based on parity of arrangements already in place for the Chairman of the Electoral Matters Committee be introduced.**
- 7) a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) using the multiplier of 0.03 of the basic allowance for payments to the Chairman of Licensing Sub-Committee hearings be introduced.**
- 8) the SRA of the Chairman of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee be aligned with the Chairman of the Licensing Committee multiplier of 0.3(approximately £35 per annum).**

87\25

WYTHALL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Strategic Housing and Worcestershire Regulatory Services presented the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan. It was noted that this was a detailed plan and that Wythall Parish Council had worked extremely hard to develop an in depth and well thought out document.

Members welcomed the Plan and commented that it was a huge community effort to develop and that it included several priorities such as allotments, primary health care, Wythall station and signage for Wythall Library. Members felt that the last priority detailed could perhaps be funded by Worcestershire County Council, the Parish Council or a Bromsgrove District Council Members' Ward Fund contribution rather than it being classed as a priority.

There were some queries regarding affordable homes allocation in the Local Development Plan and any neighbourhood Plan that sat underneath the Plan. It was noted that the Local Development Plan superseded any Neighbourhood Plans therefore whatever the allocation in terms of the Local Development Plan would be applicable. However, further information would be provided to Members following the meeting.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor K. Taylor and seconded by Councillor K. May.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the letter at Appendix 2 be sent to Wythall Parish Council as the District Council's response to the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan submission version;
- 2) a six-week statutory ('Regulation 16') representation period on the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan be held by the District Council;
- 3) delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to make minor modifications, as necessary, to the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents with consent of Wythall Parish Council;
- 4) delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to appoint an independent examiner to undertake examination of the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan following the statutory representation period; and
- 5) delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director for Planning, Leisure and Culture Services to arrange a referendum on the Wythall Neighbourhood Plan, subject to the recommendations set out in the examiner's report.

88\25

TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER A REPORT FROM THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Prior to presenting report the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing thanked the Chairman, the Leader and Officers who had been involved in the visit from Chadsgrove School. It had been a successful visit and one that the young people had really enjoyed.

The annual report from the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing was the presented for Members' consideration. This was a detailed report that highlighted some excellent work being undertaken across the District.

There was a significant amount of work taking place in respect of Family Hubs. Members were informed that the Government had introduced a 'Best Start in Life' Strategy which included rolling out of Best Start Family Hubs. There had been communications provided as part of the projects, which included case studies of the work taking place.

Members were informed that Lifeline was a well-used and much needed service for vulnerable residents within the District. A significant number of calls were received on a daily basis. Lifeline was part of the CCTV Monitoring Centre. The Portfolio Holder suggested that if Members wished to visit the Monitoring Centre, they could contact Councillor Webb who would be happy to arrange a visit in order for Members to see the equipment on offer and the improving technology.

Information was provided on the Bromsgrove Partnership which enabled partners to be brought together resulting in an excellent working relationship which benefited residents. Newsletters were available to outline the work of the Partnership and other useful information to share.

Thanks were extended to all the Officers who worked in this area particularly Family Hub & Social Prescribing Team Leader, CCTV & Telecare Services Manager, Bromsgrove and Redditch Partnerships Manager, and Bromsgrove and Redditch Partnership Officer.

Members commented that this report outlined some of the best activities undertaken by the Council. The engagement events had been successful, and the Challenge Dad event was particularly welcomed to provide activities for fathers and children within the District.

There was a query regarding the response times for the Falls team and a delay experienced previously. It was noted that this was unusual and would be looked into. However, on the whole the Falls team were particularly responsive to call outs. In terms of maintenance of the Lifeline equipment, it was noted that there were regular spot checks. If there had been any issues experienced for residents with the equipment this was also unusual. There were a number of equipment options available from Lifeline which resulted in a solution for all service users.

Members queried access to the Community Transport as detailed in the report. Was this service available in the wider District and how could residents access this? Leaflets for the service were requested by Members, and the Cabinet Member undertook to provide some leaflets on this matter to Members. It was noted that partners were working together to provide Bromsgrove specific leaflets which outlined all

Community transport services within the District. Members were keen that the service also reached the outer areas of the District such as Alvechurch, Hagley and Rubery. However, Members were really pleased with this service for the residents of the District.

There had been some positive feedback in terms of the support provided by Hagley Library which had been supported by Hagley Parish Council. It was requested that this information be provided in order to pass on to the Parish Council.

It was confirmed that there were a number of initiatives in order to combat loneliness and isolation. An example of this was community walks which encouraged social interaction and physical activity. It was suggested that these kinds of initiatives be promoted more widely to increase uptake.

There was a query in respect of digital changeover and its particular impact on Lifeline and the equipment used and backup batteries etc. It was reported that a significant amount of work had been undertaken to cover this matter for residents. However, if there was further information this would be provided to Members to give assurance that there were arrangements in place in terms of a network issue. Information on how to contact electricity suppliers if there were vulnerable residents within Members' wards was provided. Members noted that there were some challenges in respect of connectivity, particularly in more rural areas within the District. Work was ongoing in order to provide a good service for all resident across the District and across the County.

Members stated that this was an excellent report which highlighted the great work that the Council and Members undertook in order to prevent social isolation and improve health and wellbeing for the residents of Bromsgrove.

No vote was required for this report.

89\25

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

Particulate Monitoring

The Chairman informed Council that the report in respect of Particulate Monitoring had been deferred and a further report would be presented to Cabinet with costings to be considered as part of the Budget Setting process.

Pay Policy Statement 2026/27

The Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling presented the Pay Policy for Members' consideration.

In doing so it was noted that the Localism Act required English and Welsh local authorities to produce a Pay Policy statement. The Act required the statement to be approved by Full Council and adopted by 31st March each year for the subsequent financial year. Members were informed that the Pay Policy Statement for the Council was included at Appendix 1 to the report.

The purpose of the statement was to provide transparency with regard to the Council's approach to setting the pay of its employees by identifying the following:

- a) the methods by which salaries of all employees were determined
- b) the detail and level of remuneration of its most senior staff i.e. 'chief officers', as defined by the relevant legislation
- c) the Committee(s) responsible for ensuring the provisions set out in this statement were applied consistently throughout the Council and for recommending any amendments to the full Council.

The Council's pay and grading structure comprised of grades 1 – 11. These were followed by grades for Managers, Assistant Director 1, Assistant Director 2, Director WRS, Executive Director, Director of Finance S151 and then Chief Executive; all of which arose following the introduction of shared services with Redditch District Council.

Within each grade there were a number of salary/pay points. Up to and including grade 11 scale, at spinal column point 43, the Council used the nationally negotiated pay spine. Salary points above this were locally determined.

All Council posts were allocated to a grade within this pay structure, based on the application of a Job Evaluation process. Posts at Managers and above were evaluated by an external assessor using the Hay Job Evaluation scheme.

In common with the majority of authorities the Council was committed to the Local Government Employers national pay bargaining framework in respect of the national pay spine and annual cost of living increases

negotiated with the trade unions. All other pay related allowances are the subject of either nationally or locally negotiated rates.

Bromsgrove District Council was managed by a Senior Leadership Team who managed shared services across both Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils. All of the posts listed had been job evaluated on this basis, with the salary costs for these posts split between both Councils.

The policy also set out the following:

- The recruitment of Chief Officers
- Additions to the salaries of Chief Officers (there is no Performance related pay)
- Termination payments
- Advertisement/publicity of posts

The Council's definition of lowest paid employees was persons employed under a contract of employment with the Council on full time (37 hours) equivalent salaries in accordance with the minimum spinal column point currently in use within the Council's grading structure. As at 1st April 2026 this was £24,413 per annum.

Following the presentation of the report, Members queried the level of pay for the lowest grade within the scale as detailed in the report. It was explained that there were no employees within the Council at that grade. However, Members were concerned that this level did not meet the current minimum wage. In order to provide more detailed information in respect of this report, it was deferred to the next meeting of the Council.

Business Rates - Discretionary Rates Relief Policy 2026/27

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented the Business Rates - Discretionary Rates Relief Policy 2026/27 for Members' consideration. In doing so it was noted that in terms of recommendation two (contained within the agenda pack) during the consideration of the report at Cabinet it had been noted that the rural settlement of Burcot should not have been allocated to Blackwell and Lickey Parish Council. In addition, Members had raised that Belbroughton was not the Parish Council name (as detailed in Appendix A), it was in fact Belbroughton and Fairfield. Both these had been updated prior to the consideration of the report at the Council meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Finance noted that this was an annual report which needed to be approved by full Council. There had been no proposed changes to the current successful policy from the previous year. Thus, providing stability for local organisations during economic uncertainty.

The scheme continued to support the Council Priority of supporting local people and local communities.

Section 47 of The Local Government Finance Act 1988 provided billing authorities with the power to award discretionary rate relief to ratepayers. The Localism Act 2011 and the Non-Domestic Rating Act 2023 removed some of the restrictions on the award to grant relief where it was reasonable and, in the interest, if taxpayers. The relief was shared fifty per cent with Government, forty per cent with the District Council nine per cent with the Worcestershire County Council and one per cent with the Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority.

For specific Government schemes, e.g. the 2026 supporting small businesses relief grant costs were fully reimbursed via Section 31 grants which ensured there was no impact on the Council's budget.

The key criteria for the financial years 2026-2027 focussed on supporting entities that delivered clear local community benefits and aligned with the Council's key policies.

Members were informed that charities in receipt of eighty per cent mandatory charitable relief could also receive a further twenty per cent discretionary relief, and not-for-profit organisations could also receive relief of up to one hundred per cent.

Support was available to Rural Settlements through this policy along with short term hardship relief in exceptional circumstances. Members were reminded that if they were aware of any businesses that received any relief it would be worth reminding them that they would need to re-apply for the new financial year.

Members queried the definition of a Rural Settlement in this context. It was reported that an area designated as rural was made by government and identified as a settlement with a population of less than three thousand people living there. Members were concerned, that there were some areas within their Wards that should potentially be included as rural settlements. However, it was noted that the list of Rural Settlements included within the report was provided by Government. If

Members wished to obtain further clarity on these settlements they should contact the Revenue Services Manager directly.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor S. T. Nock and seconded by Councillor K. May.

RESOLVED that

- 1) A non-domestic rates discretionary relief policy be approved and adopted from 1st April 2026; and**
- 2) Subject to the removal of Burcot as a settlement from the Lickey and Blackwell Parish, the rural settlement list included in the policy be approved and adopted for use from 1st April 2026.**

Council Tax - Empty Homes Discounts and Premiums 2026/27

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented the Council Tax - Empty Homes Discounts and Premiums 2026/27 for the consideration of Members.

In doing so it was reported that Council tax discounts and premiums for empty properties would be applied from the 1st of April 2026. With the primary goal for these discounts and premiums to incentivise homeowners to bring long-term empty homes back into use to support local housing supply.

Determinations were made under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. This Act permitted Councils to apply one hundred per cent premium after a property had been empty for more for one year. The Council first introduced this 12-month threshold in April 2024.

The Policy stated that properties that were vacant and unfurnished for thirty days would be 100 per cent discounted. From day 31 onwards, there would be zero per cent discount with full council tax payable.

When major repair structural alterations were carried out there would be 100 per cent discount for a maximum of twelve months or six months post completion, whichever was sooner.

From 1st April 2026 for all dwellings except those excepted from premium by the Prescribed Classes of Dwellings regulations, the

discount under section 11(2)(a) would not apply and the following premiums will be charged:

Period Unoccupied and Unfurnished	Premium Applied
Less than 5 years	100% premium (total charge 200%)
5 years or more, but less than 10 years	200% premium (total charge 300%)
10 years or more	300% premium (total charge 400%)

The Government had introduced mandatory exception classes to specific residents which were detailed as follows:

Class	Description	Exception
E	Dwelling which is or would be someone's sole or main residence if they were not residing in job-related armed forces accommodation.	Long-term empty and second home premiums.
F	Annexes forming part of or being treated as part of the main dwelling.	Long-term empty and second home premiums.
G	Dwelling which are being actively marketed for sale – time limited to 12 months.	Long-term empty and second home premiums.
H	Dwellings which are being actively marketed for let – time limited to 12 months.	Long-term empty and second home premiums.
I	Unoccupied dwellings which fell within the exempt class F (left empty by a deceased person) and where probate has been granted. Time limited to 12 months from probate.	Long-term empty and second home premiums.
J	Dwellings where the liable person is resident in a job-related dwelling provided by their employer, or for the liable person is a job-related dwelling.	Second home premiums and adjustment to discount for unoccupied furnished homes
K	Caravan pitches occupied by a caravan, or boat moorings occupied by a boat.	Second home premiums and adjustment to discount for

		unoccupied furnished homes
L	Seasonal homes where year-round occupation is prohibited.	Second home premiums.
M	Vacant homes which require or are undergoing major repair works to render them habitable, or vacant homes undergoing a structural alteration.	Long-term empty homes premium.

Members welcomed the changes in terms premiums and discounts and queried whether these would be backdated. It was reported that this was a technical question and would be provided following the meeting.

It was questioned how the Council would know whether there was an empty home. It was reported that this was up to the taxpayer to report or that the Council would carry out a visit to the property to check the status in terms of whether it was occupied or empty.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor S. T. Nock and seconded by Councillor K. May.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the determinations as set out in Appendix A be adopted with effect from 1st April 2026.**
- 2) the Assistant Director of Finance and Customer Services be authorised to consider, on a case-by-case basis, a reduction to the long-term empty premium under Section 13A(1)(C) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.**
- 3) the Council retained the existing discounts for unoccupied and furnished homes, as set out in Appendix A and did not implement additional council tax premiums for unoccupied and substantially furnished homes.**

Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented the Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27 which sought to formally adopt the Council Tax Support Scheme 2026-2027.

It was reported that the Council was required to review and approve its local Council Tax reduction scheme annually by 11th of March each year.

Members were informed that the recommendation from Cabinet was to retain the successful income banded scheme introduced in 2021 with one specific update to protect residents.

Maximum support was one hundred per cent for eligible working age residents. It was proposed that the bands be uprated by 3.8 per cent to align with national benefit increases.

The income banded model reduced administration burdens and aligned closely with the Universal Credit scheme. It was reported that the major precepting authorities had been consulted and were in agreement with this approach.

The Scheme had a total cost of just under £5 million shared between the District, which was thirteen per cent, Worcestershire County Council at seventy per cent, Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia at twelve per cent and Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority at five per cent.

Operating these bands was a balanced measure to maintain the real-time value of support for our most vulnerable residents without creating unsustainable pressures on the collection fund.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor S. T. Nock and seconded by Councillor K. May.

RESOLVED that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme be retained for 2026-27 tax year, subject to uprating of income bands by 3.8% in-line with increases to national benefits.

90\25

TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 7TH JANUARY 2026

During consideration of the minutes from the Cabinet meeting held on 7th January 2026 clarification on the WhatsApp and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy was requested, with particular focus on training. It was confirmed that training for staff would be provided. In addition, there was a Members' policy being prepared and training would be provided in due course.

91\25

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (TO FOLLOW)

The Chairman explained that one Question on Notice had been submitted for this meeting.

Question submitted by Councillor S. Colella.

“Could the Leader please confirm that she will ask the Monitoring Officer to seek external legal advice from specialist Counsel on the validity and methodology of the setting of the housing targets by the government and report back to Group Leaders.”

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling provided a detailed response for Members’ consideration.

In doing so it was confirmed that the Assistant Director for Democratic, Legal and Procurement Services (and Monitoring Officer) had been contacted regarding this matter and had agreed to look into this matter and provide feedback to Group Leaders.

92\25

MOTIONS ON NOTICE (TO FOLLOW)

The Chairman advised Members that one Motion on Notice had been submitted for consideration at this meeting. Group Leaders had considered the Motion prior to the meeting and had agreed that this would not be debated at the meeting and a letter be sent on behalf of all Group Leaders.

Members expressed that they were not in agreement with the decision made by Group Leaders and wished to debate the Motion at this meeting.

Therefore, Council considered the following Motion on Notice that was submitted by Councillor J. Elledge:

“This Council invested a great amount of time and effort into ensuring our decision on the local government reorganisation was fully researched, considered, discussed and took note of our residents wishes. With 5 of the 6 Worcestershire District or Borough Councils backing the 2 unitary authorities, along with the majority of the residents who responded to the consultation, I am disgusted that our MP has chosen to support a single unitary authority.

I call upon the Cabinet Member for Local Government Reorganisation and Climate Change to urgently write to our MP, on behalf of the Council, vigorously opposing his position, laid out in Westminster last week supporting a single unitary authority, in direct conflict with the wishes of his constituents, and urging him to reconsider.”

Members discussed the Motion in detail including the following:

- Members were unhappy that a letter would be sent in respect of this matter and that it would be more appropriate for a face-to-face discussion to take place.
- The use of some of the language within the Motion was not considered appropriate for submission to a Council meeting. There needed to be consistency in the approach to language used at Council both written and spoken.
- As an elected Member of Parliament (MP), the MP for Bromsgrove did have the right to speak on matters even if it was not in agreement with the proposal from the Council. Members raised that not all Councillors were in support of the two unitary proposal and this was also applicable if the local MP did not agree with the two unitary approach proposal. Members felt that the discussions should be measured and professional, even if they did not agree with the sentiment expressed by the MP. If Members were keen to contact the local MP, they could do that as an individual Member rather than submitting a Motion in this forum.
- If Members were not in agreement with the Group Leaders, who were elected by each Group, what was the process in order to address their dissatisfaction with such decisions.
- The structure of Motions on Notice and the wording of the context provided in the preamble. It was explained that the preamble was provided as previously when this had not been provided Members were unsure as to what the context was for the Motion. The wording for what the Motion was asking Council to do was usually provided at the end of the printed Motion. It was clarified by Officers that the action as detailed in the Motion, and what Members would be required to vote on was

“...call upon the Cabinet Member for Local Government Reorganisation and Climate Change to urgently write to our MP, on behalf of the Council, vigorously opposing his position, laid out in Westminster last week supporting a single unitary authority, in direct conflict with the wishes of his constituents, and urging him to reconsider”.

The Motion on Notice was proposed by Councillor J. Elledge and seconded by Councillor P. McDonald.

The Motion on Notice was subject to a recorded vote:

Members voting FOR the Motion on Notice:

Councillors A. Bailes, R. Bailes, S. Baxter, J. Clarke, S. Colella, J. Elledge, E. Gray, C. Hotham, R. Hunter, B. Kumar, R. Lambert, M. Marshall, P. McDonald, S. Peters, S. Robinson, K. Taylor, H. Warren-Clarke, S. Webb, P. Whittaker and S. Evans (20).

Members voting AGAINST the Motion on Notice:

Councillors D. Forsythe, B. McEldowney and J. Stanley (3).

Members voting to ABSTAIN on the Motion on Notice:

Councillor S. Ammar, A. Dale. K. May, S.T. Nock (4).

Therefore, on being put to the vote, the Motion on Notice was carried.

RESOLVED that

The Council call upon the Cabinet Member for Local Government Reorganisation and Climate Change to urgently write to our MP, on behalf of the Council, vigorously opposing his position, laid out in Westminster last week supporting a single unitary authority, in direct conflict with the wishes of his constituents, and urging him to reconsider.

[Councillors H. Jones and J. Robinson left the meeting prior to the vote on this item].

93\25

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

There was no Urgent Business on this occasion.

94\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 S.100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006,

the public be excluded from the meeting for the following matters on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (A) of the said Act, as amended:

Minute Item 95 – Medium Term Financial Plan 2026-27 to 2028-29 Fees and Charges and Consultation Outcomes including Worcestershire Regulatory Services Budget Recommendations.

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MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2026-27 TO 2028-29 FEES AND CHARGES AND CONSULTATION OUTCOMES INCLUDING WORCESTERSHIRE REGULATORY SERVICES BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2026-27 to 2028-29 Fees and Charges and Consultation Outcomes including Worcestershire Regulatory Services Budget Recommendations for members consideration.

The report covered several areas as detailed below:

- The Chancellor's Autumn Statement
- The provisional Local Government Settlement
- The outcome of the public consultation on the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2026-27 to 2028-29 Fees and Charges and Consultation Outcomes including Worcestershire Regulatory Services Budget Recommendations
- Proposals for Fees and Charges
- Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) Budget adjustments.

It was explained that this was Stage One of the Budget setting process with the final stage of approval due to take place in late February or early March 2026 once the Local Government Settlement was confirmed. There had also been some delays experienced for Worcestershire County Council who had proposed to agree their Budget later than anticipated.

It was reported that there would be discussions with all Groups individually and at Finance and Budget Working Group meetings in order for all Members to have the opportunity to contribute to the Budget Setting process, whilst recognising the challenging time frame along with the work that had to be undertaken.

Members were reminded that when considering the initial Budget in November 2025 it was reported that there was £1.03 million deficit for 2026/2027, £399,000 deficit for 2027/2028 and additional pressures emerging for 2028/2029.

The provisional Local Government Settlement confirmed a net reduction in core spending for Bromsgrove of £100,000 for 2026/2027, £500,000 for 2027/2028 and £900,000 for 2028/2029. This net reduction would be offset by half a million pounds in respect of traditional funding driven by the fairer funding review which redistributed resources based on assessed need and consolidated multiple grants.

Members were informed that there were several key pressures as follow:

- Fairer funding review impact phase reduction of £2 million over three years
- Inflationary pressures at 3.8 per cent
- Pay awards at two per cent plus a one per cent living adjustment.
- The cost of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). It was noted that there was a contingency of £250,000 in both 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 for preparatory work.

There had been some changes in terms of grant funding. It was reported that the New Homes Bonus funding had been scrapped and housing related grants consolidated.

Work streams currently underway by Officers were that contracts and recharges were being reviewed, rationalising support services and preparing for LGR.

In terms of Fees and Charges, the initial assumption had been a two per cent increase which equated to £100,000. However, following a detailed review of projected income levels of individual fees and charges, the uplift was now a further £152,000 in 2026/2027 and £153,000 ongoing from 2027/2028.

The Budget consultation outcomes were presented to Members. It was explained that the consultation was conducted from 20th November 2025 to 2nd January 2026.

There had been 223 completed surveys analysed which was lower than in the previous year when there had been 279 responses received. It was noted that there had been at least one response from every area within the District.

The top themes as detailed in the responses were infrastructure (roads, public amenities public transport), the impact of development, Bromsgrove Town Centre and supporting businesses. Most responses received agreed with the Fees and Charges rise of four per cent and nearly sixty per cent of respondents agreed with an increase of Council Tax of 1.9 per cent.

There were no changes in terms of the Capital Programme from papers considered previously.

Following the presentation of the report several areas were discussed in detail:

- Covid -19 Grant – Members were concerned that this was still being held in Reserves and whether the funding should be allocated to those services and businesses that required help, such as the hospitality sector.
- Garden Waste Fees and Charges Increase at 7% - Members were concerned that there was not robust oversight in terms of keeping correct records on whether residents had paid for the Garden Waste Service. It was raised that in some areas not all brown bins had been paid for but were being collected and some that had been paid for were not collected. Officers undertook to look at this matter further.
- Accessibility Update for Upland Grove Play Area – It was requested that information be provided on the Capital Bid discussed at the previous meeting of Council. Members were reminded that there was an Inclusive Play Policy which had recently been approved and was in the process of being implemented. The Play Audit Strategy would also be implemented once there had been a resolution for staffing in this service area. Members stated that as part of the consultation on the Budget, residents expressed that play areas and green spaces were important to them and this should be noted. It was raised that there had not been much movement in terms of works carried out so far in terms of the ten-year programme contained within the Strategy. It was felt that these works should get underway as soon as possible particularly in light of LGR.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor S. T. Nock and seconded by Councillor K. May.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Members take account of any feedback from the Consultation on the Budget 2026/27.
- 2) Members endorse the further work / proposals being undertaken on the Medium-Term Financial Plan to produce a balanced position for 2026/27 – 2028/29 including the initial set of savings proposals and pressures including fees and charges increases.

- 3) the recommended increases relating to Worcestershire Regulatory Services of £25,000 for 2027/28 and £59,000 for 2028/29 be approved.
- 4) the updated three-year capital programme 2026/27 – 2028/29 along with available funding for further capital projects to be undertaken going forward and the proposed projects for funding along with revenue implications.

(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 it might include information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). However, there is no exempt information contained in this record).

The meeting closed at 9.04 p.m.

Chairman