

Public Document Pack



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 14TH OCTOBER 2026

AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

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

AGENDA

WELCOME

1. **To receive apologies for absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest**

To invite Councillors to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Disclosable Interests they may have in items on the agenda, and to confirm the nature of those interests.

3. **To confirm the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 15th July 2026 (Pages 7 - 30)**
4. **To receive any announcements from the Chairman and/or Head of Paid Service**
5. **To receive any announcements from the Leader**
6. **To receive comments, questions or petitions from members of the public (Pages 31 - 32)**

A period of up to 15 minutes is allowed for members of the public to make a comment, ask questions or present petitions. Each member of the public has up to 3 minutes to do this. A councillor may also present a petition on behalf of a member of the public.

7. **Urgent Decisions**
8. **To receive and consider a report from the Portfolio Holder for Finance (Pages 33 - 38)**

Up to 30 minutes is allowed for this item; no longer than 10 minutes for presentation of the report and then up to 3 minutes for each question to be put and answered.

9. **Findings of the Future Local Governance in Bromsgrove Working Group - Recommendation from the Electoral Matters Committee (Pages 39 - 48)**
10. **Introduction of the National Scheme of Delegations of Planning Functions (to follow)**

This report will follow in a supplementary pack for the meeting.

11. **Bromsgrove District Local Plan - Gateway 1 Self-Assessment and Summary of Scoping Consultation (Pages 49 - 108)**
12. **Designation of the Monitoring Officer Function (Pages 109 - 112)**
13. **Audit, Standards and Governance Committee Annual Report 2025/26 (Pages 113 - 132)**
14. **Overview and Scrutiny Board Annual Report 2025/26 (Pages 133 - 164)**

15. Changes to Committee Membership

Council is asked to note the following changes to Committee membership:

Joint Appointments Committee:

- Councillor S. Robinson has replaced Councillor R. Hunter.
- Councillor H. Warren-Clarke has replaced Councillor P. McDonald.

Planning Committee:

- Councillor S. Robinson has been appointed as a new named substitute for members of the Liberal Democrat Group.

16. Recommendations from the Cabinet (Pages 165 - 166)

To consider the recommendations from the meeting(s) of the Cabinet held on 22nd July and 16th September 2026.

17. Background Information on the recommendations from the Cabinet

- (i) Low Cost Housing Capital Receipts (Pages 167 - 172)
- (ii) Treasury Management Outturn Report 2025/26 (Pages 173 - 188)
- (iii) Quarter 4 Financial Monitoring and Outturn Report 2025/26 (Pages 189 - 214)
- (iv) BDC Equality Strategy 2026-2030 (Pages 215 - 242)

At the Cabinet meeting held on 16th September 2026 Members agreed to extend the timeframes for the Equalities Strategy and the Engagement Policy from 2026 – 2028 up to 2026 – 2030.

- (v) Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Policy 2026/27 (Pages 243 - 264)

18. To note the minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 22nd July and 16th September 2026 (Pages 265 - 290)

19. **Questions on Notice (To follow)**

To deal with any questions on notice from Members of the Council, in the order in which they have been received.

Each Member who is scheduled to ask a Question on Notice may ask up to one supplementary question which must be based on the original question or the answer provided to that question.

A period of up to 15 minutes is allocated for the asking and answering of questions. This may be extended at the discretion of the Chairman with the agreement of the majority of those present.

20. **Motions on Notice (To Follow)**

A period of up to one hour is allocated to consider the motions on notice. This may only be extended with the agreement of the Council.

21. **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**

J. Leach
Chief Executive

Parkside
Market Street
BROMSGROVE
Worcestershire
B61 8DA

6th October 2026

If you have any queries on this Agenda please contact
Jess Bayley-Hill and Jo Gresham

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joanne.gresham@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

GUIDANCE ON FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

Please note that this is a public meeting and will be live streamed for general access via the Council's YouTube channel.

You are able to see and hear the livestream of the meeting from the Committee Pages of the website, alongside the agenda for the meeting.

If you have any questions regarding the agenda or attached papers, please do not hesitate to contact the officer named above.

Notes:

Although this is a public meeting, there are circumstances when Council might have to move into closed session to consider exempt or confidential information. For agenda items that are exempt, the public are excluded and for any such items the live stream will be suspended and that part of the meeting will not be recorded.



INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

Access to Information

The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 widened the rights of press and public to attend Local Authority meetings and to see certain documents. Recently the Freedom of Information Act 2000 has further broadened these rights, and limited exemptions under the 1985 Act.

- You can inspect agenda and public reports at least five days before the date of the meeting.
- You can inspect minutes of the Council, Cabinet and its Committees/Boards for up to six years following a meeting.
- You can have access, upon request, to the background papers on which reports are based for a period of up to six years from the date of the meeting. These are listed at the end of each report.
- An electronic register stating the names and addresses and electoral areas of all Councillors with details of the membership of all Committees etc. is available on our website.
- A reasonable number of copies of agendas and reports relating to items to be considered in public will be made available to the public attending meetings of the Council, Cabinet and its Committees/Boards.
- You have access to a list specifying those powers which the Council has delegated to its Officers indicating also the titles of the Officers concerned, as detailed in the Council's Constitution, Scheme of Delegation.

You can access the following documents:

- Meeting Agendas
- Meeting Minutes
- The Council's Constitution

at www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

15TH JULY 2026, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Officers: Mr J. Leach, Mr. G. Revans, Mr. J. Walton, Mrs. C. Felton, Mrs. R. Bamford, Mr. M. Dunphy, Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill and Ms M. Bassett

21\26

TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

At the start of the meeting the Chairmen led Members in observing a minute's silence in memory of former MP and MEP, Ann Widdecombe, who had been murdered the previous week.

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors H. Jones, B. Kumar, R. Lambert, D. Nicholl and J. Stanley.

22\26

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors S. Ammar and C. Hotham declared other disclosable interests in Minute Item No. 34/26 –Recommendations from the Cabinet – in respect of the Shared Homelessness Strategy 2026 – 2031 - and in Minute Item No. 35/26 – the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17th June 2026, in their capacity as private sector landlords. They remained present during consideration of these items and voted thereon.

23\26

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 25TH FEBRUARY, 6TH MARCH AND 20TH MAY 2026

The minutes of the Council meetings held on 25th February and 6th March 2026 and the minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 20th May 2026 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meetings held on 25th February and 6th March 2026 and the minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 20th May 2026 be approved as a true and correct record.

24\26

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

The Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman advised that his charity for the year would be Touchstones. Touchstones provided bereavement support to children living in Worcestershire. The Chairman advised that he had visited the charity and had felt touched by the information that he had received about their work the impact that this had had on children and their families.

Since the previous meeting of Council, the Chairman advised that he had attended Bromsgrove Carnival as well as the Wythall 10k run.

On behalf of the Council, the Chairman concluded his announcements by wishing the England Football team good luck in the semi-final of the football world cup against Argentina. The Chairman also commented that one of the English midfielders, Jude Bellingham, was from Bromsgrove District and he highlighted how proud the local community was of Mr Bellingham's achievements.

The Head of Paid Service's Announcements

The Chief Executive advised that it was anticipated that the government would announce its decision on local government reorganisation in Worcestershire the following day. A briefing with all Members on this subject was booked to take place on Thursday 23rd July 2026.

25\26

TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

There were no specific announcements from the Leader on this occasion.

26\26

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

No comments, questions or petitions from the public were considered on this occasion.

27\26

URGENT DECISIONS

Members were advised that no urgent decisions had been taken since the previous meeting of Council.

28\26

REQUEST FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF CHARTER TRUSTEES IN THE STRUCTURAL ORDER FOR THE NEW UNITARY AUTHORITY

At the start of Members' consideration of this item, it was agreed to suspend the standing orders to permit the Senior Electoral Services Officer to speak at the meeting.

The Leader presented the report and in doing so commented that it was proposed that within the relevant Structural Changes Order for the Worcestershire Unitary Authorities there should be a proposal to introduce Charter Trustees in the unparished areas of Bromsgrove District.

Council was advised that this was an important matter to debate at a time when Members were considering whether to undertake a Community Governance review (CGR) in respect of the unparished areas in the District. Should Parish Councils subsequently be established in those locations, then the Charter Trustees would be abolished.

Reference was made to recent discussions of this subject that had occurred at a meeting of the Electoral Matters Committee. It was noted that there had not been unanimity in terms of views amongst Members in respect of the proposal to introduce Charter Trustees. Members also noted that, whilst Parish Councils made a valuable contribution to their local communities, there was limited time available for Members to undertake a CGR prior to Local Government Reorganisation and Charter Trustees would be a useful addition in the meantime.

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

RESOLVED that

- 1) The standing orders be suspended to permit the Senior Electoral Services Officer to speak at the Council meeting;
- 2) A request be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for provision to be included in the relevant Structural Changes Order for the establishment of Charter Trustees for the unparished areas of the current Bromsgrove District from the re-organisation date; and
- 3) Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Monitoring Officer, to agree the wording of the request and to take any necessary steps to progress the proposal through the Local Government Reorganisation process.

29\26

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN - SCOPING CONSULTATION

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Strategic Housing presented a report on the subject of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan – Scoping Consultation.

Council was informed that approval was sought for the Council to go out to consultation in accordance with the new national plan setting process.

In considering this matter, Members were asked to note that responses received in previous consultation exercises concerning the Local Plan had not been forgotten and would continue to inform the development of the plan. The scoping document was a new stage in the process and provided the Council with a chance to reflect on matters prior to progressing further with the new Local Plan.

The proposed consultation would not be considering potential development sites. Instead, the focus of the consultation was on the overarching scope of the Local Plan.

The strength of feeling that had been articulated in responses to the previous consultation on the draft Local Plan was recognised. In particular, key points had been raised in respect of infrastructure, including transport, the high streets, green spaces and the green belt in the District. A study of the green belt had been commissioned and was expected to also take into account the concept of a grey belt.

In this latest consultation exercise, the Council was keen to hear people's views. However, Members were asked to note that points raised in the previous consultation exercise would not need to be repeated.

A lot of work had been undertaken in preparing for this consultation exercise. Officers in the Planning Department were thanked for their hard work in respect of this matter.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the content and in doing so noted that the subject of the consultation had been discussed in detail at meetings of the Local Plan Cross Party Working Group. It was acknowledged that the Council did not have a choice in respect of holding this consultation or on introducing a new Local Plan. The suggestion was made that the authority needed to work hard to progress with a Local Plan. This would help to address issues with speculative planning applications, which were causing concerns for Members.

During consideration of this item, reference was made to Worcestershire County Council's Minerals and Waste Local Development Scheme. A request was made for Bromsgrove District Councillors to be kept appraised on work on the scheme, due to the implications for the Local Plan.

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

RESOLVED that the Bromsgrove District Local Plan Scoping Report be approved for consultation from the 24th July to the 4th September 2026 inclusive.

30\26

AUDIT, STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

The Chairman advised that in advance of the meeting group leaders had agreed that the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee's Annual Report 2025/26 should be deferred for consideration at the following Council meeting due to take place in September 2026.

31\26

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2025 - 2026

The Chairman advised that in advance of the meeting group leaders had agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Board's Annual Report 2025/26 should be deferred for consideration at the following Council meeting due to take place in September 2026.

32\26

TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER A REPORT FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING, LEISURE AND CULTURE

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture presented an annual report to Council. Members were advised that, as an annual report focusing on the health and wellbeing remit of her portfolio had been considered at Council relatively recently, the report had focused on Leisure and Culture Services on this occasion only.

In presenting the report, the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture highlighted the following points for Members' consideration:

- There were a lot of events due to take place over the summer.
- The Parks and Open spaces team had been working on the Inclusive Play Policy.
- Sanders Park and Lickey End Recreation Ground had both been awarded green flag status.
- A £500,000 grant had been received from Arts Council England which would be allocated to the Renew Programme.
- Sports Development Officers continued to work in partnership with external organisations in respect of the delivery of sports services at leisure centres.
- A new Couch to 5k event was due to be introduced in the District.

Once the report had been presented, Members queried the extent to which works on the King George playing field were likely to proceed as previously agreed by the Council. Confirmation was provided that as this was a key park in the district these proposed works would be going ahead.

Reference was also made to the consultation event in respect of the switch on of Christmas lights in Bromsgrove and whether the outcomes of this engagement exercise had been reviewed. Members were advised that analysis of the feedback was ongoing and the suggestion

was made that further information would be provided in respect of this matter after the meeting.

33\26

CONSTITUTION REVIEW WORKING GROUP - RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO THE CONTENT OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

The Leader presented a recommendation that had been proposed at a meeting of the Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) held on Friday 10th July 2026.

During the CRWG meeting, Members had discussed the process that could be followed in the event that two rival candidates for the position of Chairman of a Committee received an equality of votes. Members were asked to note that on the date of the Council meeting, there was nothing in the Council's constitution that addressed this point.

The group had discussed different available options. However, Members had agreed that should this stalemate occur again in future, lots should be drawn to determine the successful candidate. The CRWG's preference had been for this to take the form of the successful candidate's name being drawn from a hat.

Members were asked to note that, given the importance of a Chairmen's role on a Committee, the CRWG had felt that the drawing of lots would not be appropriate to determine the permanent appointment of a Chairman for a municipal year. Instead, the CRWG was proposing that, where there was an equality of votes for two rival candidates at a meeting, lots should be drawn to identify a Member who could Chair that meeting only. The appointment of a Chairman for the municipal year would then be revisited at the following meeting of that Committee, when there would be a further opportunity to achieve a majority vote on a permanent appointment.

The proposal involved amending the Council Procedure Rules in the Council's constitution. Therefore, Council was being invited to consider whether to endorse this amendment to the constitution.

Following the presentation of the report, reference was made to the hat that would be used in the process envisaged and questions were raised about whether a specific hat would need to be obtained. However, there was general agreement that this process should be introduced and that the constitution should be amended accordingly.

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

RESOLVED that the Council Procedure Rules in the Council's constitution be amended to require a name to be drawn from a hat to appoint a Chairman to preside at that meeting of a Committee in the event of an equality of votes being returned for two rival candidates for the position of Chairman of the Committee for that municipal year.

34\26

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

Shared Homelessness Strategy 2026 – 2031

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Strategic Housing presented the Shared Homelessness Strategy 2026 – 2031.

Council was informed that the strategy had been developed collaboratively by all the District Councils in Worcestershire, with the exception of Worcester City Council. Local people who had experienced homelessness had been consulted during the development of the strategy.

The aims of the strategy were to ensure that homelessness was rare, brief and non-recurring. Members were asked to note that homelessness was linked to issues with health and wellbeing as well as wider economic factors.

Preventing homelessness was an overriding objective of the Council. The prevention of homelessness required early intervention and strategies to keep people living in their own homes.

An action plan had been developed for the strategy. This action plan detailed clear priorities and targets which would be monitored over time.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the various potential causes of homelessness. The suggestion was made that medical conditions associated with mental ill health could contribute to homelessness and questions were raised about whether this could be reflected in the strategy. Members were thanked for this suggestion and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Strategic Housing commented that she would raise this suggestion with relevant Council officers.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor S. Baxter and seconded by Councillor K. Taylor.

RESOLVED that the Shared Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031 be approved.

(Prior to consideration of this item, Councillors S. Ammar and C. Hotham declared other disclosable interests in respect of the Shared Homelessness Strategy 2026 – 2031 in their capacity as private sector landlords. They remained present during consideration of the item and voted thereon.)

Enforcement and Civil Penalty Policy

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Strategic Housing presented the Enforcement and Civil Penalty Policy report for Council's consideration.

Members were informed that this item followed a report that had been considered at the Annual Council meeting in respect of the Renters' Rights Act 2025. The report proposed that Members agree changes to the Scheme of Delegations in respect of enforcement of civil penalty notices for private rented sector functions. The content of the policy was based on national best practice and proposed proportionate steps underpinned by the legislative position.

The policy addressed a range of issues relating to landlord and tenancy compliance. Areas such as risk and harm were also taken into account.

The proposed delegations to officers would enable them to act on the Council's new legislative powers and duties. This would also incorporate delegations that had previously been agreed in respect of electrical safety. The delegations would ensure that enforcement activities were lawful and proportionate.

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

RESOLVED that

- 1) Delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director Community and Housing Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to update the Policy in line with any legislative or government guidance updates; and
- 2) The Scheme of Delegations be updated to reflect the adoption of the Policy and the new Enforcement powers under the Renters Rights Act 2025 in accordance with the wording set out in Appendix 1 (of the minutes).

35\26

TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 17TH JUNE 2026

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17th June 2026 were submitted for Council's consideration.

(Prior to consideration of this item, Councillors S. Ammar and C. Hotham declared other disclosable interests in respect of the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17th June 2026, in their capacity as private sector landlords. They remained present during consideration of the item.)

36\26

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The following Questions on Notice were submitted for consideration at the meeting.

Business Prospectus

Councillor S. Ammar addressed the following Question on Notice to the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling:

“Please could you provide an update on the development of the Council’s business prospectus, including when you expect it will be published?”

Members were advised that a written response would be provided to this question.

Traveller Pitches

Councillor J. Clarke addressed the following Question on Notice to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Strategic Housing:

“According to the Council’s own assessment, 17 Gypsy and Traveller pitches are needed by the end of 2028/29 and a further 20 over the period to 2029/2042. How many pitches have been provided since the last assessment?”

Members were advised that a written response would be provided to this question and to subsequent comments made by Councillor Clarke in respect of the subject of his question.

Road Sweeping

Councillor S. Evans addressed the following Question on Notice to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Community Safety:

“Could you please confirm why each ward is only due to have one visit from the road sweeper each year with some wards not now due another sweep until May 2027?”

Members were advised that a written response would be provided to this question.

Councillor Evans subsequently asked the following supplementary question:

“Given we’re sharing services with Redditch Borough Council, why do they get multiple sweeps when we get the one?”

Members were advised that a written response would be provided to this question.

Parks and Playgrounds

Councillor S. Robinson addressed the following Question on Notice to the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture:

“Please could you set out how the Council is planning to spend the £1.5m allocated in February’s budget to improving parks and playgrounds?”

Members were advised that a written response would be provided to this question.

(The written responses are attached at Appendix 2 to these minutes.)

37\26

MOTIONS ON NOTICE

There were no Motions on Notice for discussion at the meeting.

38\26

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 for consideration on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 6.44 p.m.

Chairman

APPENDIX 1

COMMUNITY SERVICES			
1. Strategic Housing			
Subject	Detail	Delegated by:	Delegated to:
Discretionary Housing Assistance Grants.	To determine applications for Housing Assistance Grants under the Regulatory (Housing Assistance Grants) (England and Wales) Order 2002.	Cabinet/ Leader.	Strategic Housing Manager.
Home improvement Agency	To deal with day to day management of the Home Improvement Agency Service	Cabinet	Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services/ Strategic Housing Manager/Private Sector Team Leader
General regulatory and enforcement activity for private sector housing (including Houses of Multiple Occupation)	1. To exercise all local authority regulation and enforcement functions under the legislation listed below:- - Housing Act 1985 - Housing Act 1988 - Housing Act 2004 (and associated regulations) - Housing and Planning Act 2016 - Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector and Social Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 - Environment Protection Act 1990 section 79(1)(a) - Building Act 1984 - Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Acts 1976, 1982	1.	Strategic Housing Manager

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To sign housing-related notices for houses in multiple occupation under the Housing Act 2004.

To inspect conditions under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System - Housing Act 2004.

To issue interim and final orders

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APPENDIX 2

	• <u>Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949</u> • <u>Public Health Act 1961</u> 2. To institute legal proceedings <u>for offences under the legislation listed above.</u> 3. To impose a financial penalty for an offence as an alternative to bringing a prosecution.		
Housing Associations - Nominations.	To deal with the nomination where necessary of homeless applicants to housing association dwellings.	Cabinet/ Leader.	Strategic Housing Manager.
Housing Capacity Study.	To update the site details and housing figures in the Housing Capacity Study on an annual basis using data from the Housing Land Availability Study.	Cabinet/ Leader.	Strategic Housing Manager.
Housing Corporation Social Housing Grant.	To administer and approve applications and to authorise payment of local authority grant and Housing Corporation Grant under the Housing Corporation IMS System.	Cabinet/ Leader.	Strategic Housing Manager.
Housing Grants.	To determine applications for housing grants under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.	Cabinet/ Leader.	Strategic Housing Manager.
Low Cost Housing.	1. To administer the Council's low cost housing scheme including the making of nominations and the sale of the Council's interest in dwellings.	1. Cabinet/ Leader.	1. Strategic Housing Manager. 2. Principal Solicitor.

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APPENDIX 2

	2. To take all necessary action including the institution of legal proceedings to recover deferred payments from the purchases of low cost homes who are in breach of covenants made in the purchase of low cost housing. 3. To revise fees in relation to low cost housing transactions.	2. Cabinet/ Leader. 3. Cabinet/ Leader.	3. Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services, Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services and Financial Services Manager in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holders.
Low-Cost Housing Capital Receipts <i>(New delegation agreed by Members in 2024/25)</i>	To approve individual proposals for new developments or the purchase of existing satisfactory dwellings and flipping Shared Ownership to affordable or social rented properties and the spend relating to these, as and when they were brought forward.	Council	The Assistant Director Community and Housing Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing.
Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant.	1. To determine applications for housing grants under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. 2. To grant extensions of time of up to six months within which improvements are to be completed.	1. Cabinet/ Leader. 2. Cabinet/ Leader.	1. Strategic Housing Manager. 2. Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services.
Protection from Eviction Act.	<u>1. To institute legal proceedings in respect of illegal evictions and harassment under the provisions of the</u>	Cabinet/ Leader	<u>1 and 2</u> Assistant Director of Community & Housing Services in consultation

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APPENDIX 2

	Protection From Eviction Act 1977 and Housing Act 1988 (as amended by the Renters Right Act 2025). 2. To impose a financial penalty for an offence under section 1 of the Protection from Eviction Act (as amended) as an alternative to bringing a prosecution.		with Principal Solicitor.
Discrimination in the rental market	To take enforcement action under Chapter 3 of the Renters Rights Act 2025, including the imposition of financial penalties in accordance with the Councils Enforcement and Civil Penalties Notice Policy	Cabinet/ Leader	Assistant Director of Community and Housing Service
Stating the proposed rent and rental bidding	To take enforcement action under Chapter 6 of the Renters Rights Act 2025, including the imposition of financial penalties in accordance with the Councils Enforcement and Civil Penalties Notice Policy	Cabinet/Leader	Assistant Director of Community and Housing Service
Renters Rights Act 2025 – investigatory powers (Added following report on Renters Right Act in March 2026)	To exercise all powers in respect of entry, inspection, investigation, service of notices and other functions for the purposes of the following legislation: - Renters Rights Act 2025 sections 114 to 132 (investigatory powers) and section 110 (reporting to government)	Cabinet/ Leader	Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services] / [Housing Strategy Manager] / [Private Sector Housing Team Leader] / [Housing Strategy & Enabling Team Leader] / [Private Sector Housing Officer]

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APPENDIX 2

Renters Rights Act 2025 Investigations (Added following report on Renters Right Act in March 2026)	To undertake investigations into potential offences under sections 33, 34, 39 and 56 of the Renters Rights Act 2025	Cabinet/ Leader	[Assistant Director ofCommunity and Housing Services] / [Housing Strategy Manager] / [Private Sector Housing Team Leader] / [Housing Strategy & Enabling Team Leader] / [Private Sector Housing Officer]	Formatted: Font: 12 pt Formatted: Font: 12 pt Formatted: Font: 12 pt Formatted: Font: 12 pt Deleted: Formatted: Font: 12 pt
Private Sector Housing Enforcement and Civil Penalty Policy	To update the Policy in line with any legislative or government guidance updates	Cabinet/ Leader	Assistant Director of Community and Housing Service following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing	Formatted: Font: +Body (Aptos), Not Bold Formatted: Font: +Body (Aptos) Formatted: Font: 11 pt Formatted: Font: +Body (Aptos) Formatted: Indent: Left: 0 cm Formatted: Indent: Left: -0.1 cm, First line: 0 cm, Space After: 10 pt, Line spacing: Multiple 1.15 li, Tab stops: Not at 0.6 cm Formatted: Font: +Body (Aptos) Deleted: ¶ ¶ ¶ ¶ Formatted Table
Utilities - Restoration or Continuance of Services.	To deal in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder and generally in accordance with emergency procedures with applications received pursuant to the arrangements according to section 33 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 1976 (Public Utility Services to Dwellings) and to take such action as may be necessary for the recovery of any payments made by the Council in pursuance of such arrangements.	Cabinet/ Leader.	Executive Director Finance or Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services	
Regulation of Mobile Home Sites	To institute legal proceedings under section 1 of the Caravan	Council	Strategic Housing Manager in	

APPENDIX 2

	Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 To take all steps to manage and regulate Mobile Home Sites, including the exercise of power of entry under the following legislation:- • Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 • <u>Caravan Sites Act 1968</u> • <u>Mobile Homes Act 2013</u>	Cabinet/Leader	consultation with the Principal Solicitor Strategic Housing Manager
Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Sector) (England & Wales) Regulations 2015	To implement enforcement powers under the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Sector) (England & Wales) Regulations 2015	Cabinet	Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services
First Homes	To make amendments to Council's the First Homes Policy to reflect future Government guidance	Cabinet	Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing
Local Lettings Plan	To agree and adopt future Local Lettings Policies	Cabinet	Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing
Requisition for Information	To serve a requisition for information under section 16 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1976	Cabinet/Leader	Strategic Housing Manager
Boarding up of dangerous buildings	To serve notice under Section 9 of the Local Government	Cabinet/Leader	Strategic Housing Manager

APPENDIX 2

	(Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982		
Statutory Nuisance	To take all necessary action in relation to statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.	Council	Strategic Housing Manager

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1. From Councillor S. Ammar

Question for the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling

“Please could you provide an update on the development of the Council’s business prospectus, including when you expect it will be published?”

Response

Thank you, Chairman, and thank you to Councillor Ammar for the question.

A response has been sent to your letter.

The motion approved by Council on 25th February 2026 asked Cabinet to consider the creation of a business prospectus, and I am pleased to confirm that this is being taken forward for consideration in that spirit.

We recognise the importance of presenting Bromsgrove as a place where businesses can start, grow and invest with confidence. We already work closely with a range of partners and agencies to promote business support, and we want to make sure that any additional material we produce adds real value, is accurate, and is delivered through the most effective channels.

There are also wider considerations which Cabinet will need to take into account.

In particular, the Government’s recent announcement on Local Government Reorganisation that Bromsgrove will form part of a new North Worcestershire Unitary Authority.

It is important that any prospectus is developed in a way that remains useful and relevant in that changing context. Therefore, we will ensure outcomes are designed to meet current Bromsgrove requirements while remaining flexible enough to support a wider North Worcestershire approach in future.

To support this work, the Council’s economic development service is currently concluding a programme of restructuring which has taken place over the spring and early summer. That new structure has now been agreed and is intended to provide additional capacity to deliver the Council’s economic development priorities, including stronger business engagement and better promotion of the support available to local businesses.

The next stage is to complete the recruitment exercise for that revised structure. Once that resource is in place, officers will be able to consider what further support may be provided to businesses, including the proposed business prospectus.

The prospectus is scheduled for discussion by Cabinet in September. Subject to Cabinet’s consideration, we will then be in a clearer position to determine the form it should take and the timetable for publication.

Agenda Item 3

In the meantime, our immediate priority remains to ensure that businesses can access accurate, up-to-date information through the channels that are already working well, including the Worcestershire Growth Hub, while we develop the next steps in a considered and practical way.

2. **From Councillor J. Clarke**

Question for the Cabinet Member for Planning and Strategic Housing

“According to the Council’s own assessment, 17 Gypsy and Traveller pitches are needed by the end of 2028/29 and a further 20 over the period to 2029/2042. How many pitches have been provided since the last assessment?”

Response

Pitches should be provided through the local plan process or via planning permissions granted by the local planning authority or the Planning Inspectorate.

The most recent Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showperson Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) was completed in September 2025, this still represents the most up to date position with respect to pitches across the district.

The Local Planning authority has not granted permissions for any pitches since September 2025.

In terms of decisions by the Planning Inspectorate since September 2025, whilst there has been one approval at Blackwell Road, this site was already included in the GTAA study.

3. **From Councillor S. Evans**

Question for the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Community Safety

“Could you please confirm why each ward is only due to have one visit from the road sweeper each year with some wards not now due another sweep until May 2027?”

Response

The road sweeping programme was reviewed in 2025/26 and changed to a ward-based approach, with the aim of sweeping each ward at least twice a year. Bromsgrove’s road network extends to approximately 220 miles, equating to around 440 miles of kerb line, as both sides of the road require sweeping.

Historically, available resources only allowed for one full sweep of each area each year. This led to a build-up of detritus, making some areas take longer to clear. The service has therefore invested in improvements, including a third HGV road sweeper, two replacement sweepers and additional compact sweepers, to improve resilience and increase coverage. These changes are intended to increase the programme from one district-wide sweep each year to at least two.

Operational arrangements for higher-speed rural roads are currently being reviewed following updated traffic management guidance. While this may affect the scheduling of some rural routes, the aim remains to provide regular sweeping across all wards and to direct additional resources where inspections, local intelligence or service requests identify a need.

Supplementary Question:

“Given shared services with Redditch Borough Council, why do they receive multiple sweeps when Bromsgrove District receives one?”

Response:

“The road sweeping programme was reviewed in 2025/26 and changed to a ward-based approach, with the aim of sweeping each ward at least twice a year. Bromsgrove’s road network extends to approximately 220 miles, equating to around 440 miles of kerb line, as both sides of the road require sweeping.

Historically, available resources only allowed for one full sweep of each area each year. This led to a build-up of detritus, making some areas take longer to clear. The service has therefore invested in improvements, including a third HGV road sweeper, two replacement sweepers and additional compact sweepers, to improve resilience and increase coverage. These changes have reaped the hoped-for outcomes and as of the end of August 2026 the service has completed 2 sweeps. Data is currently being analysed to see whether 3 annual sweeps could be achieved.”

4. From Councillor S. Robinson

Question for the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture

“Please could you set out how the Council is planning to spend the £1.5m allocated in February’s budget to improving parks and playgrounds?”

Response

The £1.5 million allocation approved within the February budget for the financial year 26/27 is intended to support improvements to the Council’s parks and play provision, with a particular focus on enhancing play opportunities, improving accessibility, increasing inclusivity and investing in supporting park infrastructure across the district, the specific scheme as detailed when this money was agreed are:

Sanders Park Tennis Court Fencing	£30K
Improvements to footpaths in strategic Parks	£225K
Sanders Park Café Improvements	£170K
Sanders Park Car Park Extension	£30K
Licky End Water Voles, Reed Bed and Wildlife Survey	£20K
Sanders Park Skate Park	£250K
St Chads Skate Park, Play Area and MUGA	£250K
DDA Play Area Improvements in Strategic Parks	£500K

In addition to this we also have our previously agreed play area investment priorities which covers the 10 year period 2024 -2035 which was informed by the Bromsgrove Play Audit and Investment Plan, which identifies sites based on factors such as condition, usage, accessibility and community need. Which has a budget allocation of £180K in 2026/27 that will see revamped play areas at Kinver Drive, Swans Length and Hollywood Lane.

This Council is committed to creating welcoming, accessible and inclusive parks and play spaces that provide opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities to enjoy.

The £1.5 million allocation approved within the February budget for the financial year 26/27 is intended to support improvements to the Council’s parks and play provision, with a particular focus on enhancing play opportunities, improving accessibility, increasing inclusivity and investing in supporting park infrastructure across the district.

Play Area Investment priorities have been informed by the Bromsgrove Play Audit and Investment Plan which covers the ten 10 year period 2024 -2035, which identifies sites based on factors such as condition, usage, accessibility and community need. This evidence-based approach ensures that funding is directed to those areas where it can deliver the greatest benefit for children, young people and families. This amounts to a total pot of £2,005,487 that relates to both creating new and refurbishing and enhancing existing play areas.

The programme will focus on the replacement of ageing and life-expired play equipment, the introduction of inclusive play features that can be enjoyed by children of all abilities, and improvements to accessibility, including pathways, surfacing and site access where appropriate.

Agenda Item 3

In addition to play improvements, the approved capital programme includes a range of wider infrastructure and park enhancement projects designed to improve accessibility, community use, environmental value and the overall visitor experience. The current allocation of funding is as follows:

Scheme	Budget
Sanders Park Sports Improvements (tennis court fencing)	£30,000
Improvement to footpaths in Strategic Parks	£75,000
Sanders Park Café Improvements	£170,000
Sanders Park Car Park Extension	£30,000
Lickey End Water Voles, Reed Beds Work and Wildlife Survey	£20,000
Sanders Park Skate Park	£250,000
St Chad's Skate Park, Play Area and MUGA	£250,000
Strategic Parks Pathway Improvements	£150,000
DDA Play Area Improvements in Strategic Parks	£500,000
Total	£1,475,000

The largest proportion of the funding will be directed towards improving accessibility and inclusivity within play areas, including £500,000 for Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) related improvements in strategic parks. This work is shaped by PIPA guidance (Plan Inclusive Play Areas) and our own policy based on this. Significant investment is also being made in youth recreation facilities through the proposed redevelopment of the skate parks at Sanders Park and St Chad's, alongside play area and multi-use games area improvements.

Further investment will support improvements to park infrastructure, including footpaths, pathways, sports facilities, visitor amenities and accessibility enhancements. Environmental improvements are also included through habitat enhancement works at Lickey End.

The Council is committed to creating welcoming, accessible and inclusive parks and play spaces that provide opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities to enjoy. The £1.475 million investment will therefore be prioritised towards schemes that improve both the quality of play provision and the wider park environment, while ensuring that residents can access and enjoy these facilities safely and comfortably.

Officers will continue to develop and refine the programme of works in accordance with the Play Audit and Investment Plan and wider asset management priorities, ensuring that available resources are targeted where evidence demonstrates the greatest need and where the investment can deliver the most significant community benefit. Any unallocated balance within the approved budget will be used to support project development, contingencies and further priority improvement works identified through the audit process and ongoing assessments of need.

Bromsgrove District Council – 14th October 2026
Public Questions

- 1. From Ms K. Plummer**
Question for the Chairman:

"Bromsgrove District Council's Stourbridge road car park in Bromsgrove town centre was earmarked for sale via Cordwell Property Group in 2014. How has the council planned to use the income from this sold asset?"

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Portfolio Holder Report

Portfolio Holder Report – Finance

Introduction and Overview:

At Bromsgrove District Council Portfolio Holders provide an annual update to Council on services within their portfolio remit. These services are delivered in accordance with the Council's Priorities, as detailed in the Bromsgrove District Council Plan 2024 - 2027.

This report provides an outline of services and activities within the remit of this particular Portfolio Holder. Information is included in relation to the Council's Priorities, relevant key activities, partnership working, projects and programmes and news stories.

Whilst services will be contributing information into this report it is worth noting that not all sections of the report will be relevant to all service areas. In this circumstance, some sections may not be completed by all services.

The report will be structured as follows:

- 1) Update on Organisational Priorities, key activities and next steps
- 2) Organisational priorities related to partnership working, key activities and next steps
- 3) Good news stories

The Council has the following Priorities:

Council Priorities	Organisational priorities
Economic Development	Financial stability
Housing	Sustainability
Environment	Partnerships
Infrastructure	Organisational Culture – the 4Ps
	Budget & Resources



Portfolio Holder Report

1. Update on Council Priorities

Work within the Finance Portfolio directly supports several organisational priorities, several of which overlap or have common dependencies. During this reporting period, significant progress has been made in several areas.

Financial Stability / Sustainability / Budget and Resources:

The Council is taking a coordinated approach to strengthening its financial resilience. This brings together development of the Medium Term Financial Plan, a comprehensive review of spending and income, and improvements to the systems, controls, workforce and governance arrangements that support effective financial management. It is therefore broader than a budget-management or savings exercise and is intended to provide a more sustainable financial foundation for the Council. While the underlying structural work is progressing well, the recovery process remains subject to significant legacy pressures, system complexities, and ongoing oversight from our external auditors.

This work is particularly important within a challenging and uncertain national environment for local government. The Spending Review provides an opportunity to consider how resources can be used most effectively in support of local priorities, including where costs can be reduced, income strengthened and services delivered differently. Proposals will be developed with regard to statutory responsibilities and their potential effects on residents, communities, services and the workforce, and will only be brought forward following appropriate evidence, challenge and impact assessment.

By addressing immediate financial pressures while strengthening the Council's underlying capacity and controls, the programme will support informed Member decisions, help protect priority services and place the Council in a better position to respond to future change.

As part of the programme, the Council continues to address the governance and financial management improvements identified through the Annual Governance Statement. Material progress has been made, although some complex areas require further work and sustained management attention. Detailed monitoring and assurance will continue through the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee, while the Finance and Budget Working Group provides Member scrutiny of the developing budget and spending review.

Organisational Culture – the 4Ps:

The Portfolio continues to support organisational development through investment in workforce resilience, succession planning and strengthening



Portfolio Holder Report

professional standards across Finance. Work is underway to review structures, update role profiles and improve process documentation to reduce reliance on individual officers and improve business continuity.

Key activities since last report:

- Development of the 2027/28 Medium Term Financial Plan and Spending Review framework.
- Creation of a Finance Resilience Programme across capital, treasury management, budget management, annual closedown processes, financial systems, workforce resilience, VAT procedures and risk management.
- A revised Opportunity and Risk Management Strategy has been drafted and discussed with Member Risk Champions.
- Permanent recruitment into key Finance roles has progressed, including appointments to Finance Business Partner posts.

Anticipated Activities/Key Milestones For Next Period

The coming period will focus on turning initial review work (which has been substantial) into clear and deliverable options. Members will continue to be involved through the appropriate stages of scrutiny, consultation and decision-making. This measured approach is intended to support transparent choices, protect financial resilience and ensure that changes are considered in the context of their practical consequences for services and communities. Some key milestones include:

- Completion of the first phase of the Spending Review, development of budget proposals and Member and public engagement ahead of the approval of the 2027/28 budget and Medium Term Financial Plan in February 2027.
- Further work to strengthen treasury management, capital planning and financial reporting arrangements ahead of the approval of a revised Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Strategy in February 2027.
- Improved annual closedown procedures to strengthen the quality, timeliness and audit readiness of the Council's accounts.
- Launch of the revised Opportunity and Risk Management Strategy.
- Implementation of workforce resilience initiatives.

2. Partnership Working:

The Council works with a range of partner organisations to meet the needs of residents and businesses in the District. The following section details work delivered within the remit of this Portfolio Holder.

Financial Governance and Assurance Partnerships:



Portfolio Holder Report

Effective financial planning and improvement depend upon constructive working across the organisation and with the Council's professional advisers and assurance providers. Services are contributing operational knowledge and evidence to the Spending Review, supported by Finance, Legal, Human Resources, Procurement, ICT, Property and Performance colleagues. The Council also continues to engage with Internal Audit, External Audit, treasury and taxation advisers and transformation support, providing additional expertise, challenge and assurance as the programme develops.

Key activities since last report:

- Commenced a comprehensive review of treasury management arrangements, working with the Council's treasury advisers as appropriate.
- Continued engagement with External Audit in relation to audit readiness, accounts production and financial assurance improvements as part of the closedown improvement programme.
- Worked collaboratively across services and the Corporate Leadership Team to support development of Spending Review proposals and the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Anticipated Activities/Key Milestones and Priorities For Next Period

- Continued and regularised engagement with External Audit on accounts production, audit readiness and financial assurance.
- Ongoing work with treasury and taxation advisers on the specialist elements of the improvement programme.
- Cross-service development and challenge of Spending Review opportunities, including assessment of financial, legal, workforce, procurement, property, technology and service implications.

3. Good News Stories

Financial Resilience Programme:

Good progress has been made in establishing a joined-up and transparent programme of financial improvement.

Positive work has taken place to help ensure a better integrated approach to financial management that includes greater oversight through the work of a formal senior leadership team arrangement based on the "Golden Triangle", as recommended by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and



Portfolio Holder Report

Accountancy (CIPFA) consisting of Head of Paid Service, Executive Director of Finance /Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

The Budget Review and Spending Review are underway, permanent recruitment is strengthening the Finance service (including the successful recruitment of an Executive Director for Finance from April 2026), and more robust arrangements are being developed for accounts closedown, opportunity and risk management, financial systems and process documentation. These are substantial programmes rather than quick fixes, but together they demonstrate clear progress towards stronger, more resilient and sustainable financial arrangements.

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Future Local Governance in Bromsgrove: Preparatory Work for Community Governance Review

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Karen May, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Claire Felton, Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services
Report Author	Melissa Bassett Job Title: Senior Electoral Services Officer Contact email: melissa.bassett@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 587014
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Council Priority	All
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- 1) A budget of £30,000 be approved to fund specialist consultancy services and other associated costs to enable officers to develop a detailed report setting out the terms of reference, timetable and costs required to conduct a Community Governance Review for Council's consideration.
- 2) If Council were minded to approve recommendation 1, that the £30,000 be allocated from reserves (having regard to the resulting financial consequences set out in section 4 of this report.)

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 20 May 2026, Council agreed that a cross-party working group should undertake preparatory work to consider future local governance arrangements in Bromsgrove.

- 2.2 The Future Local Governance in Bromsgrove Working Group comprised members of the Electoral Matters Committee and other interested members. The matters considered by the working group included:
- the existing governance arrangements across parished and unparished areas of the District
 - the possible role of neighbourhood area committees within a future unitary authority
 - alternative local governance arrangements
 - the potential creation of (a) parish or town council(s) for currently unparished areas
 - the outcome of a public engagement exercise undertaken during July and August 2026.
- 2.3 Following this work, the working group concluded that there was sufficient justification to undertake further preparatory work towards a Community Governance Review.
- 2.4 Full details of the working group's work, the engagement findings and the matters considered are contained in the report presented to the Electoral Matters Committee on 24 September 2026, which is referenced as a background paper to this report.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 At its meeting on 24 September 2026, the Electoral Matters Committee considered the findings of the Future Local Governance in Bromsgrove Working Group and the proposed next steps.
- 3.2 Members discussed whether the preparatory work could be undertaken internally. The Committee was advised that officers had the necessary knowledge and experience, but that the Electoral Services team did not have sufficient capacity to undertake the work alongside the scheduled Bromsgrove District and Parish as well Redditch Borough elections in May 2027. The work was also specialist in nature and external support would provide additional capacity and an independent perspective.
- 3.3 The Committee considered the proposed initial budget of £30,000 and the work it would support. Members noted that officers would remain responsible for coordinating the project and that the initial funding would contribute towards the specialist support and additional resources needed to develop the terms of reference, timetable and detailed budgets.

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- 3.4 Members also discussed the potential costs of conducting a full Community Governance Review and establishing a new parish or town council. It was confirmed that approval of the initial funding would not commit the Council to formally commencing the review. Should Members agree to progress this idea, a further report would be presented to Council at a later date setting out the proposed geographical scope, terms of reference, timetable and full financial implications before that decision was made.
- 3.5 The Committee noted that a Community Governance Review could cover the whole District or a smaller geographical area, with the scope affecting the likely cost. Members would therefore need to establish a clear vision for the area or areas to be included as part of the preparatory work.
- 3.6 Following consideration of the report, the Committee resolved to note the working group's findings and to continue the preparatory work through the established working group. This work will develop the detailed terms of reference, proposed timetable and full budget for Council's consideration.

Proposed approach and next steps

- 3.7 The proposal is to take forward the work in two stages.
- 3.8 In this initial stage, Council is not being asked to formally commence a Community Governance Review. Instead, Council is being asked to approve the initial preparatory work and the funding required to develop a complete proposal for its consideration.
- 3.9 The preparatory work will include developing the detailed terms of reference and timetable for the review. The terms of reference will provide the formal framework for the review and will need to define its purpose, geographical scope and the matters to be considered.
- 3.10 The preparatory work will also establish:
- the full budget required to undertake a Community Governance Review
 - the officer and specialist resources required
 - the proposed consultation arrangements
 - the potential financial implications of establishing (a) new parish or town council(s).
- 3.11 Once this work has been completed, a further report will be presented to Council. This will allow Council to consider the proposed terms of

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reference, timetable and full financial implications together before deciding whether to formally commence a review.

- 3.12 If Council approves a review at that later stage, the terms of reference will be published, and the formal Community Governance Review will begin.

Timetable

- 3.13 The preparatory work would need to proceed promptly. The Government's Local Government Reorganisation programme is currently on pause and has the potential under various scenarios to impact any considered subsequent Community Governance Reviews to a lesser or greater extent depending on the timetable for LGR in Worcestershire. A CGR that is underway during the LGR transitional period would involve engagement with the shadow council.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 An initial budget of £30,000 is requested to undertake the preparatory stage of the work.
- 4.2 This estimate has been developed following initial consideration of the likely cost of specialist consultancy support. It would allow a consultant to be involved from the outset in developing the scope, terms of reference, timetable and detailed financial requirements for the review.
- 4.3 The funding would also provide for additional Electoral Services resources where required. This is necessary because the preparatory work will take place alongside the delivery of scheduled elections in Bromsgrove and Redditch in May 2027.
- 4.4 Once the preparatory work has been completed, a further report detailing the proposed terms of reference, timetable and funding required will be presented to Council for its consideration. This will enable Council to consider the scope, timescale and full financial implications before deciding whether to formally commence a Community Governance Review.
- 4.5 The £30,000 does not represent the full cost of conducting a Community Governance Review or establishing (a) parish or town council(s). Those costs will be assessed during the preparatory stage and figures will be presented to Council as part of any later report (as described at paragraph 3.11.)

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- 4.6 Members will note that the likely costs of conducting a full Community Governance Review and establishing (a) new parish or town council(s) can only be indicative at this stage. This is because they will depend on the geographical scope of the review, the consultation arrangements and the final recommendations.
- 4.7 Based on the costs of reviews undertaken by other authorities and an assumption that the Council may need to write directly to electors who currently reside in unparished areas (approximately 28,000 electors), an initial planning estimate of around £60,000 has been identified for conducting a full Community Governance Review. This would be in addition to the £30,000 requested through this report for the preparatory stage.
- 4.8 If the review resulted in the creation of a new parish or town council, an indicative sum up to £150,000 may also be required to support its establishment. The actual amount would depend on the size and structure of a new Parish/Town Council, the services and assets involved, staffing requirements and other initial operating costs.
- 4.9 On this basis, the overall cost of the preparatory work, the full review and the potential establishment of a new parish or town council could be in excess of £240,000. This is an early planning estimate only. However, Council is being asked to approve £30,000 at this stage, with more detailed costs and proposed funding arrangements to be presented alongside the terms of reference before any review is formally commenced.
- 4.10 It should be noted that the Council's Earmarked Reserves are currently being reviewed as part of a wider budget review including revenue spend and savings, income generation and capital programme affordability. Currently that review is due to be concluded by November 2026. Committing the Council to unfunded expenditure that relies on an allocation from reserves would not be considered financially sustainable. Consequently, in approving the recommendations in this report, Council must acknowledge that reductions in service spending may need to be delivered to replace any allocations made from reserves.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The decision sought at this stage relates only to the preparatory work required to develop the proposed terms of reference, timetable and full budget. Approval of the recommendations would not formally commence a Community Governance Review.

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5.2 A Community Governance Review would formally commence following approval and publication of its terms of reference. A further report will therefore be presented to Council before the review begins.

5.3 Any Community Governance Review must be undertaken in accordance with Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, relevant statutory guidance and the timetable set out in the published terms of reference.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

6.1 At the time of writing, local government reorganisation is paused, and the future timetable had not been confirmed by Government.

6.2 The Council's present working assumption is that elections to any shadow unitary authority will be deferred until May 2028. This remains subject to change.

6.3 On that assumption, there may be sufficient time for Bromsgrove District Council to undertake and complete a Community Governance Review before a future transitional period, including making any resulting Reorganisation of Community Governance Order.

6.4 To preserve that opportunity, the preparatory work will need to proceed promptly, with the intention of presenting the proposed terms of reference and full financial information to Council in early 2027.

6.5 If the Government's timetable changes, the proposed timetable and the Council's ability to complete or implement the review will need to be reconsidered. The work will therefore need to remain flexible and take account of any further legislation, guidance or transitional arrangements.

Relevant Council Priority

6.6 Work on local governance arrangements supports all the Council's current priorities.

Climate Change Implications

6.7 There are no direct climate change implications arising from the proposals detailed in this report.

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Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.8 There are no direct equalities implications arising from the preparatory work recommended in this report.
- 6.9 Equalities and accessibility will need to be considered when developing the proposed terms of reference and consultation arrangements for any future Community Governance Review. This will include ensuring that residents and stakeholders have a fair opportunity to participate and that consultation information is accessible and understandable.
- 6.10 A further report, should one be agreed to request approval to commence a Community Governance Review, will consider the equalities implications in more detail and, where appropriate, will be supported by an equality impact assessment.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 At the time of writing, the timetable for local government reorganisation remains uncertain. Any change could affect the Council's ability to complete and implement a Community Governance Review. This will be managed by progressing the preparatory work promptly and keeping the Government's timetable under review.
- 7.2 Both the delivery of scheduled elections and the conduct of a Community Governance Review are statutory processes with separate legal and procedural requirements. Insufficient capacity could affect the Council's ability to deliver either process lawfully and effectively. The proposed specialist support and additional Electoral Services resources are therefore required to ensure that both workstreams are appropriately resourced.
- 7.3 The full cost and scope of the review are not yet known. The preparatory stage will establish these before Council is asked to decide whether to formally commence the review.
- 7.4 Approval of the preparatory work does not commit the Council to any particular outcome. Any future recommendations will be informed by the statutory consultation and the evidence gathered during the review.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background Papers

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Report: Electoral Matters Committee 24 September 2026 'Findings of the Future Local Governance in Bromsgrove working group and Finstall Parish CGR' [Electoral Matters Committee Report 24th September](#)

Minutes of the Electoral Matters Committee 24th September
Link: [Minutes 24th September 2026](#)

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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Karen May, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling	05/10/26
Assistant Director	Claire Felton, Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services	02/10/26
Financial Services	James Walton, Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer	05/10/26
Legal Services	Nicola Cummings – Principal Solicitor - Governance	29/09/26

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14th October

Bromsgrove District Local Plan – Gateway 1 Self-Assessment and Summary of Scoping Consultation.

Relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor Sue Baxter
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Ruth Bamford
Report Author Mike Dunphy	Job Title: Strategic Planning and Conservation Manager email: m.dunphy@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 81325
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Council Priority	Economic Development Environment Housing Infrastructure
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Council is asked to RESOLVE that

1.The Local Plan Gateway 1 Self-Assessment at Appendix A, be approved for formal publication on the 30th October 2026, and following publication the Council progresses with plan-making as per the published timetable.

2. The Local Plan Summary of Scoping Consultation at Appendix B, is approved and published alongside the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Nationally there has been a change and there is a new system for plan making in the UK. For Bromsgrove District Council this means that a new plan needs to be prepared under the new system. The previous progress made on the Bromsgrove District Local Plan (that was being prepared under the old system), most notably the information obtained from consultation on the Draft Development Strategy over the Summer and Autumn of 2025, will be rolled forward into the new plan making

system. This work will be used to help inform the decisions taken as the Council prepares a new draft plan.

- 2.2 Towards the end of last year work with respect to the above national changes in the planning regulations progressed, and in March 2026 the Government formally introduced the new 30+4 plan making system. This system, in conjunction with changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), are intended to streamline plan-making to allow for quicker adoption of Local Plans, therefore increasing the delivery of housing and economic development across the country.
- 2.3 The purpose of this report is to outline the next stage required to continue plan preparation under the new system, allowing the progression of the new Bromsgrove District Local Plan to adoption as quickly as possible.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 In May 2026 the Council considered a report detailing the process of the scoping consultation. Following the approval of the previous report The scoping consultation was undertaken between 24th July to 5pm on 4th September 2026.

Scoping Consultation

- 3.2 Regulation 22 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026 requires that '*A local planning authority must prepare, in connection with the preparation of their local plan, a document to be known as their "summary of scoping consultation".*' The Summary of Scoping Consultation can be found at Appendix B.
- 3.3 The full details of the consultation are provided in the Summary of Scoping Consultation, including details of who was consulted and whether they responded, individual summaries of each question asked, and also details of out-of-scope comments received. There were 252 individual respondents to the scoping consultation (149 from the public, 32 from consultation bodies and other stakeholders, and 71 on behalf of developers and landowners)."
- 3.4 The Council's Local Plan Cross Party Working Group met on 30th September and in discussion with officers concluded that there were no issues raised as part of the scoping consultation which would prevent the Council progressing to the next stages of plan-making.

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Gateway 1 Self-Assessment

- 3.5 The next stage of the plan-making process is to pass through 'Gateway 1'. In order to progress through Gateway 1, the Council is required to undertake a self-assessment to demonstrate that it is ready to progress at speed, and meet the 30 month timetable that has been published.
- 3.6 Appendix A is the self-assessment undertaken by officers and takes into account the preparation work undertaken, including the scoping consultation. The self-assessment is based on the template provided by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The accompanying guidance states when completing the self-assessment '*Aim to write in plain English and keep your summaries brief - somewhere between 150 and 250 words per section is what we recommend.*'
- 3.7 Under the overall title of 'How we got ready to prepare a new local plan' there are five sections to the self-assessment.
- We have published a timetable for preparing the plan
 - We have established project management and governance arrangements
 - We planned how we will consult on the plan
 - We began scoping out the content of the plan
 - We began a Strategic Environmental Assessment

As can be seen at Appendix B and as explained and agreed at the 30th September Local Plan Cross Party Working Group that the resources and processes are in place to pass through Gateway 1. This allows the Council to continue preparing the plan in line with the published timetable. For clarity that timetable is repeated below.

Local plan event	Start date	End date
1) Publish local plan timetable under regulation 8	29 th June 2026	
2) Publish notice of intention to commence local plan preparation under regulation 19(1)	29 th June 2026	
3) Publish notice of scoping consultation under regulation 20(1)(b)	See event 4 Below	
4) Scoping consultation under regulation 20	24 th July – 4 th September	

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Local plan event	Start date	End date
5) Gateway 1: Publish Gateway 1 self-assessment summary under regulation 21(3)	October 2026	
6) Publish summary of scoping consultation under regulation 22	October 2026	
7) Publish notice of local plan content and evidence consultation under regulation 23(1)(a)	June 2027	
8) Consultation on the proposed local plan content and evidence (not less than six weeks) under regulation 23	June 2027	July/August 2027
9) Publish summary of consultation on the proposed local plan content and evidence under regulation 24	October 2027	
10) Gateway 2: observations and advice will be sought under section 15CA(3) of the Act in accordance with regulation 26	October 2027	
11) Publish Gateway 2 observations and advice in accordance with section 15CA(5) of the Act and regulation 26(5)	November/December 2027	
12) Publish notice of proposed local plan consultation under regulation 27(1)(a)	March 2028	
13) Consultation on the proposed local plan (not less than eight weeks) under regulation 27	March 2028	April/May 2028
14) Publish summary of consultation on the proposed local plan under regulation 30	August/September 2028	
15) Gateway 3: observations and advice will be sought under section 15CA(3) of the Act in accordance with regulation 31	August/September 2028	
16) Publish Gateway 3 observations and advice in accordance with section 15CA(5) of the Act and regulation 31(5)	September/October 2028	
17) Submit the proposed local plan for independent examination under section 15D(1) of the Act	October 2028	

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Local plan event	Start date	End date
18) Publish the examiner's recommendations and reasons in accordance with section 15D(13) of the Act and regulation 37.	TBC	
19) Adoption of the local plan under section 15EA of the Act	April 2029	

3.8 In order to formally pass through Gateway 1, the Council must publish the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment summary. This has to be done at least the first day after the period of 4 months after which the notice of intention to commence plan making was published, therefore should members confirm the recommendations above, the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment will be formally published on the Council's website and placed in the Council's Customer Service Centre and libraries across the District on the 30th October 2026.

3.9 The Summary of Scoping Consultation cannot be published until at least the day after the date on which the Council make its Gateway 1 Self-Assessment summary available. Therefore, should members confirm the recommendations above, the Summary of Scoping Consultation will be formally published on the Council's website and placed in the Council's Customer Service Centre and libraries across the District on the 2nd November 2026.

Future Local Plan Stages

3.10 The 'local plan content and evidence' stage (local plan event number 8 in the table above) is where the Council will publish for consultation the first draft of the new Local Plan. The timetable indicates that the Council will consult on the draft plan in the summer of 2027. This will allow for all the responses from the previous Issues and Options consultation, the Scoping consultation, the additional evidence such as the revised Green Belt review to be fed into this draft plan and help develop a draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which could include all of the topics below.

- Transport
- Education
- Health
- Utilities
- Water Supply, Wastewater and Sewerage
- Energy Infrastructure
- Digital Connectivity

- Flood Risk and Drainage
- Green Infrastructure
- Open Space and Recreation
- Biodiversity and Nature Recovery
- Community Facilities
- Emergency Services
- Waste Management
- Climate Change and Net Zero
- Employment and Economic Infrastructure
- Cultural Infrastructure

This draft IDP will be published alongside the draft plan as part of the consultation. Following this consultation there will be a gateway assessment carried out by an assessor appointed by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), which will consider issues the plan may be facing at this stage, and if necessary, suggest ways in which any issues may be overcome.

- 3.11 The 'proposed local plan' stage (event 13 in the table above) is in effect the submission plan which the Council would like to present to the appointed Planning Inspector. This stage has been timetabled for Spring 2028. This is to allow for enough time to respond to the previous stages, and also for a third gateway check on the plan to be carried out by PINS prior to formal submission for independent examination.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Local Plan process has a budget of £823k, financed as follows:
- 4.2 An initial £645k has been identified in reserves from 2026/27 onwards to fund the evidence base development, Examination in Public costs and any associated legal fees.
- 4.3 Funding of £70k has been awarded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to progress the Green Belt Assessment. An additional £108k has been awarded by MHCLG to help progress the Local Plan. To retain the £108k the following requirements must be met by the Council:
- Publish a Notice of Intention to commence Local Plan preparation by 30th June 2026; and
 - Publish Gateway 1 self-assessment by 31st October 2026.

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- 4.4 The total available budget is £823k is proposed to be spent as per the table below.

Evidence base costs BDC	£420k
Legal Fees	£125k
Examination costs	£100k
MHCLG Green Belt Review	£70k
MHCLG Plan Making	£108k
Total Local Plan Spend	£823k

- 4.5 Staffing resource comes from existing posts within the establishment supplemented by three additional posts, these post have been recruited to with only one vacancy now remaining in the Strategic Planning Team, further attempts to fill that vacancy will continue, it is envisaged that agency staff will not be required at this stage

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The new plan-making system is set out in the following regulations The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 In June 2025, MHCLG wrote to Chief Executives of the Worcestershire Councils with an update on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Included within that letter is the following statement:

‘The Government also recognises that developing proposals could distract councils from their essential day-to-day activities. However, residents and businesses depend on councils to deliver crucial services and to continue the efforts needed to establish successful new unitary councils. This is particularly important for advancing local plans to allocate land for new homes. As mentioned in the invitation letters, the Government expects local planning councils to work towards adopting an up-to-date local plan as soon as possible. Local Government Reorganisation should not hinder this vital work, nor should the introduction of the new legal framework for local plan-making later this year or our strategic planning reforms. Significant financial support has already been provided to eligible councils to aid in plan-making, and we

encourage councils to utilise additional support available through the Local Government Association's Planning Advisory Service.'

- 6.2 The position expressed above remains unchanged, plan-making must continue irrespective of the LGR work. The recent announcement about the review into LGR is still being considered as this report is being drafted, although the advice remains that local plan making must continue. MHCLG are currently preparing transitional arrangements to manage the process of local plans being prepared at the same time as LGR is implemented. Taking all the above into account above LGR is not seen as reason to delay plan-making so irrespective of the outcome of the LGR review, officer advice reflects that of MHCLG and remains that plan-making must continue.

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.3 The Bromsgrove District Local Plan is relevant to the following Council priorities:
1. Economic Development
 2. Housing
 3. Environment
 4. Infrastructure

Climate Change Implications

- 6.4 The Bromsgrove District Local Plan will have significant implications for climate change, shaping the location and nature of new housing, employment, and infrastructure development.

Community Impact Implications

- 6.5 The approval of the Gateway 1 Self-Assessment and the Summary of Scoping Consultation provide the communities across Bromsgrove District with a valuable update on how the Bromsgrove District Local Plan will be progressed. The final adopted local plan will have policies and allocations which address high-quality design, provide for safer communities and help to address wider health and wellbeing by providing communities with facilities and accessible open spaces.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

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- 6.6 The consultation process is open to all to comment. An equalities impact assessment of the final plan and its policies will be prepared

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The Bromsgrove District Local Plan progress is being monitored via the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

- 7.2 The risk of not progressing a new Local Plan has been discussed at length in many forums. The benefits of preparing and adopting a new local plan amongst other things are;

- Providing an up-to-date planning framework for decision-making.
- Secures infrastructure investment through planned growth.
- Gives greater certainty to residents, communities and developers.
- Strengthens the Council's ability to resist inappropriate development.
- Supports economic growth and inward investment.
- Helps coordinate transport, education, health and other infrastructure.
- Delivers environmental improvements and biodiversity enhancements.
- Supports climate change mitigation and adaptation objectives.
- Reduces the risk of speculative development proposals.
- Ensures sufficient housing and employment land is identified.

As mentioned in section 6 of this report, MHCLG has made it very clear that it expects plan-making to continue at pace and will not be afraid to intervene if plan-making does not progress.

- 7.3 Plan-making is strongly encouraged without delay. It suggests that the Council is committed to plan-making. Whilst simply progressing the earlier stages of plan-making does not give the control an adopted Local Plan gives, progressing a Local Plan as identified by this report does help to provide evidence that the plan is progressing and shows a pathway to adopting a plan. This is useful information to use in other settings such as development management.

- 7.4 In addition, should the council not pass through Gateway 1 as described in this report, then it is envisaged that the additional funding secured will have to be returned to the Government.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A Gateway 1 Self-Assessment

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Appendix B Summary of Scoping Consultation

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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Baxter	2.10.26 at LPCPWG
Lead Director / Assistant Director	Guy Revans /Ruth Bamford	2.10.26
Financial Services	James Walton	2.10.26
Legal Services	Claire Felton	2.10.26
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)		N/A

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Gateway 1 Self-Assessment Summary

How we got ready to prepare a new local plan

We started preparing a new local plan for Bromsgrove District Council on 30th October 2026.

Government policy says we should adopt the new plan within 30 months of this date. This helps ensure we have an up-to-date local plan that responds to the needs of the area and our communities.

This document explains what we've done to get ready to meet the 30-month timeframe.

We have published a timetable for preparing the plan

The timetable shows when we expect to carry out the different stages and activities for preparing a plan. It helps us check if and how we can adopt the plan within the 30-month timeframe. We'll keep this updated as we make more progress and display any changes via a table of amendments included on the webpage linked below.

Due to previous high levels of engagement from our residents, the analysis of the responses to the two subsequent public consultations - consultation on proposed local plan content and evidence, and consultation on the proposed local plan, may take us some time to process.

To ensure we deliver our plan within 30 months, we:

- have proactively engaged with stakeholders and community groups, before publishing our notice of intention to commence through our previous consultations including the Draft Development Strategy consultation
- have undertaken extensive evidence base work including site assessment work on the land parcels available for development
- will promote the use of a digital response forms to help us analyse the responses most efficiently

Community and stakeholder engagement as well as work carried out prior to formally starting the 30-month plan-making system puts the council in a strong position to adopt our plan within the required timeframe. It also ensured that stakeholders and residents had sight of the plan-making process and the requirements for the new plan-making system early on. We are confident that we



Gateway 1 Self-Assessment Summary

will be able to draft the plan within the 30-month timeframe. We will continue to work with these groups throughout plan preparation and notify all stakeholders should amendments to the timetable be required.

[View our local plan timetable.](#)

We have established project management and governance arrangements

Preparing a local plan involves many people across the council and from other organisations. Thinking early about how the work is planned, managed and signed off helps us:

- check our progress and keep the work on track
- anticipate and manage any risks to us adopting the plan within 30 months

We have developed a project plan to help us prepare the plan in line with our local plan timetable and have set up a regular Cross Party Local Plan Working Group of elected members and key officers to monitor our progress and take the lead on plan progression. These measures ensure we have a thorough and clearly defined strategy to manage, govern and resource preparation of the local plan. When we developed the project plan, we identified some risks to its delivery. We have reflected on these risks and identified things we can do to reduce these risks.

We planned how we will consult on the plan

Public consultation is essential for the local plan to represent the needs of our communities. It must be as easy as possible for people to have their say in a way that works for them, so they can influence the way the area develops.

We used the feedback from previous Local Plan work to help us prepare an engagement strategy. This describes how we'll consult and communicate with our communities as we continue to prepare the plan. These consultations generated a high level of response which we are expecting to continue as the plan progresses. We have already undertaken some informal engagement activities and planned to increase our resource and use of digital software to analyse the responses in a timely manner.

Additionally, these consultations have allowed us to test new digital platforms for consultation as well as ways of handling and analysing high volumes of responses. We will continue to investigate the use of new software to help analyse responses more efficiently and publish this on our website.

We will promote these digital tools as the primary method of engagement due to the



Gateway 1 Self-Assessment Summary

benefits they can provide both to residents and our officers. However, given the demographics of previous respondents, we are conscious that we must continue to provide all traditional means of responding to public consultations. We have developed a methodology for integrating responses from all methods to ensure that all are considered equally.

You will be able find information about upcoming consultation activities on our website and social media channels.

[Local plan engagement strategy.](#)

We began scoping out the content of the plan

Scoping includes considering how well the existing plan is working and gathering baseline information about the area. This helps to identify our future needs and ambitions. Starting this early means we can begin preparing the new plan with a clear vision, which makes it quicker and easier to consult on the plan and make decisions about it.

Our understanding of the needs for Bromsgrove District is informed by our existing evidence base, resident and other stakeholder feedback obtained from our Draft Development Strategy and other previous consultations as well as statutory requirements.

Using the information we have gathered along with the input from our decision makers, we have:

- begun to draft a vision for the area
- started to fully understand the development requirements for our area

Additionally, we have started:

- to identify where new developments could be located based on extensive site assessment work and stakeholder feedback
- to identify what additional infrastructure is required to meet the District's development needs
- looking at what new planning policies, information or data, we would need for decision making about new developments

We've shared some of this with the public through early engagement activities and published summaries on our website.

[Self-assessment summary of our early engagement.](#)



Gateway 1 Self-Assessment Summary

We began a Strategic Environmental Assessment

We're legally required to identify, describe and evaluate any likely significant effects on the environment of:

- implementing the local plan
- reasonable alternatives considering the plan's objectives and scope

This process will consider how community, national and international environmental protection objectives and any other environmental challenges are taken into account in the plan. It will help us to predict significant environmental effects and develop ways of preventing, reducing and offsetting these.

We noted the significant strength of local support for maintaining and protecting the environment through our engagement so far. It is therefore vital we start this work early and are transparent about how we're doing the assessment when engaging stakeholders and communities.

We have contracted external consultants to work with us on the SEA. We are in the process of reviewing existing SA work undertaken to date to ensure it fit for purpose as the Local Plan progresses towards Gateway 2. By collecting baseline information and identifying relevant plans and programmes we have begun to define SEA objectives which ensure the SEA will aid in delivering a sound local plan.

Additionally, our site assessment methodology includes key environmental designations (such as SSSIs, ancient woodland and Nature Reserves) as major constraints to ensure those areas are safeguarded from inappropriate development.

How to stay up to date

For updates about upcoming consultation activities, [\[sign up to email updates\] \(provide link to signing up\)](#).

Follow us on social media to see our progress in preparing the local plan.

[Find us on Facebook.](#)

[Find us on Instagram.](#)

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN – SUMMARY OF SCOPING CONSULTATION

OCTOBER 2026

Bromsgrove District Council

Bromsgrove District Local Plan – Summary of scoping consultation (October 2026)

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Section 1 – Introduction

1.1 Overview of Bromsgrove District Local Plan Scoping Consultation

- 1.1.1 Bromsgrove District Council ('BDC') is in the process of reviewing and replacing the adopted Bromsgrove District Plan (2011–2030, adopted January 2017). The forthcoming Bromsgrove District Local Plan will be produced as a new style local plan in line with the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023. It will be prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026, which came into force on 25th March 2026, and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended).
- 1.1.2 The scoping consultation is the first consultation in the preparation of the Local Plan under the new plan-making system. BDC undertook a six-week scoping consultation between 24th July and 4th September 2026. The Council invited representations on matters relevant to the preparation of the Local Plan, including what the Local Plan should contain, and how the Council should engage with stakeholders in the preparation of it, in accordance with Regulation 20 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.
- 1.1.3 More specifically, the scoping consultation sought views on the key priorities and challenges facing the District; the vision and objectives for the Local Plan; the potential scope of locally specific topic-based policies; the evidence base needed to support the Local Plan; and the proposed consultation and engagement strategy. Questions were posed to help guide responses and to enable the Council to gather meaningful feedback as the Local Plan progresses.
- 1.1.4 The scoping consultation was concerned with establishing the scope and parameters of the Local Plan, rather than considering specific proposals such as the identification of development sites or the drafting of planning policies. Opportunities to comment on these matters will be provided through future consultation stages.
- 1.1.5 There were 252 individual respondents to the scoping consultation (149 from the public, 32 from consultation bodies and other stakeholders, and 71 on behalf of developers and landowners). Section 2 outlines the relevant consultation bodies that responded. Section 3 provides a summary of the main issues raised and BDC's response to representations received. Section 4 outlines the next steps.
- 1.1.6 This summary of scoping consultation should be read alongside the scoping document, available on the Council's website – <https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/BromsgrovePlan-scoping>.
- 1.1.7 The scoping consultation followed the publication of the Local Plan timetable and the notice of intention to commence local plan preparation on 29th June 2026, which are available to view on the Council's website – <https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/policy/strategic-planning/emerging-bromsgrove-district-local-plan/>.

Section 2 – Consultation bodies and other stakeholders invited to make representations

2.1 General and specific consultation bodies invited to make representations

- 2.1.1 The table below sets out the general consultation bodies and specific consultation bodies, as defined under regulation 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026, who were invited by email to make representations under regulation 20 (scoping consultation) and whether they responded to the scoping consultation.

General / specific consultation body consulted	Responded to the scoping consultation
Active Travel England	
Ofcom	
Openreach	
BT	
EE	
NOW TV	
O2	
Plusnet	
Sky	
TalkTalk	
Three	
Virgin Media	
Vodafone	
CTIL	
MBNL	
Canal & River Trust	
Civil Aviation Authority	
Coal Authority/ Mining Remediation Authority	
Sport England	
Environment Agency	
Forestry Commission	
Transport for West Midlands	
West Midlands Combined Authority	
Worcestershire County Council	
Warwickshire County Council	
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	
Birmingham City Council	
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	
Staffordshire County Council	
National Highways	
Historic England	
Homes England	
NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB	
National Grid Electricity Distribution (NGED)	
National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET)	
Cadent Gas	
Severn Trent Water	

Marine Management Organisation	
Natural England	
Network Rail Infrastructure Limited	
Office for Nuclear Regulation	
Office of Rail and Road	
Stratford-on-Avon District Council	
Wychavon District Council	
Redditch Borough Council	
South Staffordshire District Council	
Wyre Forest District Council	
Worcestershire Regulatory Services	
Hagley Parish Council	
Clent Parish Council	
Romsley Parish Council	
Hunnington Parish Council	
Frankley Parish Council	
Belbroughton and Fairfield Parish Council	
Dodford with Grafton Parish Council	
Bournheath Parish Council	
Catshill and North Marlbrook Parish Council	
Lickey and Blackwell Parish Council	
Stoke Parish Council	
Finstall Parish Council	
Bentley Pouncefoot Parish Council	
Tutnall and Cobley Parish Council	
Alvechurch Parish Council	
Beoley Parish Council	
Cofton Hackett Parish Council	
Barnt Green Parish Council	
Wythall Parish Council	
New Frankley in Birmingham Parish Council	
Kinver Parish Council	
Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council	
Broome Parish Council	
Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council	
Upton Warren Parish Council	
Dodderhill Parish Council	
Hanbury Parish Council	
Feckenham Parish Council	
Mappleborough Green Parish Council	
Tanworth-in-Arden Parish Council	
Tidbury Green Parish Council	
Dickens Heath Parish Council	
West Mercia Police	
Warwickshire Police	
West Midlands Police	
Staffordshire Police	
North Worcestershire Water Management	

2.2 Other consultation bodies who made representations

- 2.2.1 Any person or other stakeholders were able to make representations to the scoping consultation. The table below lists the other consultation bodies (not general or specific consultation bodies, public, developers/landowners/planning agents or other

stakeholders) who responded to the scoping consultation. For clarity, everyone on the Council's Local Plan consultation database were notified by email or letter, including members of the public, schools, GP surgeries & primary care networks, consultation bodies, developers / landowners / planning agents and other stakeholders.

Other consultation bodies	Responded to the scoping consultation
National Trust	
Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)	
Walsall Council	
Worcester City Council	
Worcestershire Wildlife Trust	
Swifts Local Network: Swifts & Planning Group	

Section 3 – Summary of the main issues raised and BDC’s response

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 This section provides a summary of the main issues raised in the representations received by the questions asked in the scoping document and how BDC has had regard/response to those representations to date. Sub-section 3.7 provides an overview of the responses received that do not specifically relate to any of the scoping questions posed in the document. Please be aware, not all respondents answered all the questions set out in the scoping document/Smart Survey questionnaire which explains why the response rate by question does not tally with the number of respondents.
- 3.1.2 Please note, there were a substantial number of responses from/on behalf of developers and landowners which provide commentary to support the promotion of their site and/or frame answers to the scoping questions around their site. As set out in the scoping document, the scoping consultation did not address site-specific matters. These representations have been assessed, but site-related comments have not been summarised for the purpose of this summary document.
- 3.1.3 Similar to paragraph 3.1.2, some responses from the public cite objections to specific sites or settlement growth across the district. These responses have also been assessed, but aforementioned comments have not been summarised for the purpose of this document.

3.2 Key priorities and challenges – Questions 1a and 1b

- 3.2.1 The key priorities and challenges section of the scoping document (section 1) provided an overview of the issues raised during last year's Draft Development Strategy ('DDS') consultation. Bringing all work together, we identified a new list of priorities and challenges that we sought feedback on covering community infrastructure provision and capacity; transport and accessibility infrastructure; housing growth; economy and employment; town centres, local centres and settlements; environment, climate and landscape; design, heritage and place quality; green infrastructure, health and wellbeing; and community engagement and local involvement. The tables below provides a summary of matters raised and underneath BDC's response to questions 1a and 1b.

Question 1a: Have we got this right, are these the issues that matter to you? Yes / No / Unsure
Responses: 173
• Yes: 65% • No: 25% • Unsure: 10%

Question 1b: Are there any key challenges and priorities that you would add to this list?
Responses: 154
<u>Summary of matters raised</u>
Public responses
• Policing concerns including crime, anti-social behaviour, and road safety (particularly speeding, pavement parking and wheeling, cycling and pedestrian safety). • Stronger emphasis on net zero targets, renewable energy, nature-based solutions, climate resilience, biodiversity protection and reducing environmental pollution. • Concerns about potential loss of sports, leisure and recreational facilities to new housing developments. • Housing delivery spread fairly across the whole district without overloading existing infrastructure or a new village. • Concerns about a lack of green route provision within Bromsgrove Town. • Concerns about the Council's ability to deliver planned growth and ensure promised infrastructure is provided. • Greater transparency in evidence, decision-making and community engagement throughout the plan-making process. • Proper discussions, not consultations, with local communities. • Red lines needed for the public to rely on. • Concerns that existing transport, education, healthcare and community infrastructure is already under pressure and that development should be infrastructure-led, with infrastructure delivered before or alongside growth. • Concern that proposed numbers of housing are exceeding Government requirements, and the Plan does not address current issues. • Objections to the scoping document must be incorporated before the scoping requirements are finalised. • Support for an appropriate housing mix, including affordable, high-quality housing for younger people, provision for SEN needs, and homes suited to local communities. • Concerns about LGR reform impact on the development of the Local Plan. Local Plan should be reconsidered in the context of a North Worcestershire Unitary Local Plan. • Note an absence of post-16/adult education provision, only the mention of school places. • Concerns that proposed development will require a new hospital to be built. • Need for working with county and national highways and neighbouring LPAs to accommodate proposed development. • Preference for small site developments. • Meeting these challenges alone will be substantial. • No clear justification for the entire work. • Prioritisation of improving local/district centres, for instance limited banking options. • Concerns about developments adjacent to recent wildfire afflicted areas in the Lickey Hills. • Concerns about ongoing detrimental impact of BREP on Bromsgrove Town residents. Concerns about a lack of meaningful engagement with residents about BREP. • Concerns that active travel is given too much priority over motorised traffic.

Concerns that speculative development is not being considered in the proposed housing numbers.
Unsuitable geological conditions.
More evidence now available from WCC Highways.
Design code for new builds and protection of non-designated heritage assets and unclassified historic buildings. Define local identities.
Greater protection of Green Belt land, green spaces, agricultural land, biodiversity, heritage assets, landscape, local identity and settlement character, including a brownfield-first approach.
Priorities must include: a transparent site-selection methodology, a Green Belt exceptional-circumstances test, and an infrastructure-first requirement. Missing challenges include landscape sensitivity, car-dependence, infrastructure constraints, and senior housing.
Recommend strengthening: ageing population needs, cross-boundary growth pressures and town centre transformation.
Greater emphasis should be placed on surface water flooding and drainage.
Development should be proportionate to the size, character and identity of existing settlements.
The Local Plan should include a clear requirement that infrastructure delivery is monitored and reviewed.
Strengthen by including water security and long-term resilience, water security and long-term resilience, digital infrastructure and future connectivity, climate adaptation alongside climate mitigation, future-proof employment in advanced technology sectors, circular economy and sustainable construction, and nature recovery at landscape scale rather than solely site-by-site biodiversity improvements.
Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses
Community Campaigner – traditional architecture design codes should be a central component especially concerning new construction. Full protection should be given to non-designated heritage assets and unclassified historic buildings.
Community Campaigner; Historic England; Worcestershire County Council – seek greater emphasis on conserving, enhancing and celebrating the historic environment, heritage assets and landscape character, including protection of non-designated heritage assets and traditionally designed development that supports placemaking and growth.
Canal & River Trust – many of the identified priorities are similar to those of the Canal & River Trust including transport and accessibility infrastructure; new development delivers meaningful local benefits; supporting renewable energy; design, heritage and place quality; and green infrastructure, health and wellbeing.
Wyre Forest District Council – pleased to see inclusion of walking and cycling but also recommend that transport and accessibility infrastructure includes 'wheeling'.
Sport England and Bromsgrove Cricket Hockey & Tennis Club – recommend strengthening the priorities by explicitly recognising the role of sport, recreation and leisure infrastructure in supporting sustainable growth, healthier communities and wellbeing. Such infrastructure should be considered as a specific strategic priority.
Worcestershire Wildlife Trust – rigorous consideration of issues set out in point 6 Environment, Climate and Landscape is essential to delivering a fit for purpose local plan. The Local Plan requires alignment with priorities in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Need to address the need for better water management in new developments e.g. limiting water use.

Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council – important to develop a holistic approach to development and co-ordination with neighbouring local authorities to provide a unified approach across the larger area.
Alvechurch Parish Council – importance of identifying the type and number of new homes required in each part of the District, ensuring new housing meets local needs, including starter homes and accommodation for older residents such as bungalows and independent sheltered living, without detrimentally impacting local character and community spirit.
Alvechurch Parish Council – any new housing should be tailored to starter homes, and the balance should be designed for use by elderly residents, such as bungalows and independent sheltered living.
Stratford-on-Avon District Council – support meeting Bromsgrove’s housing needs in full and seek clarity that the housing requirement will meet or exceed local housing need, avoiding unmet need being redistributed to neighbouring authorities. They also highlight the importance of recognising Bromsgrove’s relationship with Birmingham, responding to unmet needs arising across the GBBCHMA and wider West Midlands, and considering the role of emerging Strategic Development Strategies.
National Highways – improving and expanding active and sustainable transport links will be key to delivering sustainable development, alongside identifying and mitigating cumulative transport impacts.
West Midlands Housing Association Planning Consortium – consider that housing growth, affordable housing, infrastructure and transport are key priorities. The Local Plan should allocate sufficient land to meet housing needs, support delivery of affordable housing, including opportunities for 100% affordable housing schemes where there is a clear local need, and ensure infrastructure requirements do not undermine affordable housing delivery.
National Trust – support focus on community infrastructure, sustainable travel, green infrastructure, health and wellbeing. Consider the emerging Regional Park could play an important role in improving access to nature, supporting health and wellbeing, and enhancing green infrastructure across the district.
NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board – support the inclusion of healthcare provision as a key priority and consider the Local Plan should recognise both the role of healthy place-making and the need to ensure sufficient primary and community healthcare capacity to meet existing and future demand arising from growth. Also highlight the importance of healthcare infrastructure planning for an ageing population.
Rowney Green Association (RGA) – position of smaller settlements in existing parishes with likely major new housing will need to be considered for improved access (roads and public transport) to the district centres and other shops and services.
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council; Walsall Council – Bromsgrove should consider not only meeting its own housing and employment land needs but also contribute towards unmet housing and employment needs arising from neighbouring authorities across the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area, particularly where authorities are constrained by Green Belt designations or limited development opportunities.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey, Barberry Bromsgrove Limited, Pierpont Rose Holdings Ltd, Bloor Homes Western; Savills obo JT Cocks Settlement Trust; Lichfields obo UKLD (Bromsgrove) Ltd and St Philips Land Ltd; Delta Planning obo Bloor Homes Western & Maximus; Cerda Planning obo Riva Land (Wythall) Ltd and Ashberry Strategic Land (Bellway Homes Ltd); Define Planning & Design Ltd obo Ashberry Strategic Land; Tetra Tech obo Miller Homes; Deloitte obo Church Commissioners for England; Savills obo Bellway

Strategic Land and Miller Homes Limited; Bellway Homes Limited / Woosington One Limited and Persimmon Homes; IM Land; CBRE obo Bournville Village Trust; Boyer obo Cala Homes (Chiltern); Carter Jonas obo Persimmon Homes South Midlands; Nigel Gough Associates Ltd obo the Suddock Family and Retained Educational Charity; Nexus Planning obo Lone Star Land; Star Planning obo Richborough; Pegasus Group obo Catesby Estates; Evolve Planning obo Seven Homes; Lichfields obo Landra Developments Ltd and CDF100 Ltd; Turley obo BDW Trading (Redrow) – support meeting or exceeding housing requirements, maintaining a deliverable housing land supply, addressing housing delivery challenges and previous under-supply, providing sufficient affordable housing and contributing towards unmet housing needs arising from neighbouring authorities and the wider Housing Market Area.
• Pegasus Group obo Catesby Estates – only 40 affordable homes are delivered per year, on average, which is less than half of the identified annual need (92 units per year). This further underlines a need for the Council to plan for more housing than the minimum required by the Standard Method.
• Pegasus Group obo Catesby Estates – a detailed Green Belt Assessment must underpin the Plan, identifying grey belt sites that could be sequentially preferable for release as a result of exceptional circumstances to alter Green Belt boundaries.
• Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey, Barberry Bromsgrove Limited, Pierpont Rose Holdings Ltd, Bloor Homes Western; Bidwells obo Generator – support infrastructure delivery alongside development and highlight the importance of ensuring infrastructure provision is viable and deliverable.
• Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey, Barberry Bromsgrove Limited, Bloor Homes Western; Indurent Strategic Land Ltd; Delta Planning obo Maximus; Planning Prospects – employment land and employment growth should be supported through an up-to-date evidence base that addresses local, strategic and cross-boundary needs, including industrial and logistics requirements. Employment growth should be aligned with market demand, capitalise on Bromsgrove’s strategic location, support economic productivity, inward investment and reduced out-commuting, and be appropriately balanced with environmental protection, infrastructure delivery and the provision of new housing.
• Harris Lamb obo Barberry Bromsgrove Limited, Bloor Homes Western – encourage the Council to plan for a longer period than 10 years from the date of adoption.
• Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey, Barberry Bromsgrove Limited, Pierpont Rose Holdings Ltd and Bloor Homes Western; Carter Jonas – support prioritising development in accessible locations with strong public transport links and sustainable transport options, including bus and rail networks, alongside active travel measures such as walking and cycling to help reduce congestion and support sustainable travel.
• Harris Lamb obo Pierpont Rose Holdings Ltd – the housing growth objective lacks commentary on settlement hierarchy and whether Bromsgrove Town will continue as the main settlement and focus for growth.
• Harris Lamb obo Bloor Homes Western – the list of challenges does not reference the fact that 90% of the land in the district is Green Belt, and there is limited scope to meet the district’s housing need on brownfield and urban sites.
• Bidwells obo Generator – sites with more than one landholding risks piecemeal development and a lack of joined up development e.g. access issues and delivery of shared infrastructure.
• Midland Land Limited – consider the District faces a challenge in meeting the housing and care needs of an ageing population. Particular emphasis should be placed on addressing under-occupation of family housing, providing

specialist older persons accommodation and delivering extra care housing to support local housing needs.
• CBRE obo Bournville Village Trust – consider development viability is a key challenge, and that planning obligations, affordable housing requirements and infrastructure contributions should be balanced to ensure development remains deliverable.
• Pegasus Group obo Catesby Estates – the overview from the 2025 DDS consultation is useful, but alone cannot shape the content of the Plan; that must be led by the requirements of the NPPF and a robust evidence base.
• Stantec Planning obo IM Land – consider a key priority should be delivery of strategic growth locations and urban extensions capable of delivering housing, employment opportunities, infrastructure and sustainable communities.

BDC's response:

- 3.2.2 Identifying the District's key priorities and challenges is an important early stage in preparing the Bromsgrove District Local Plan, helping ensure the Local Plan focuses on the matters that should be addressed, as appropriate. As mentioned in the scoping document, the priorities and challenges identified stemmed from previous consultations on the Local Plan, including last summer's Draft Development Strategy consultation.
- 3.2.3 Almost two-thirds of respondents agreed with the presented priorities and challenges. A number of respondents highlighted priorities that were already identified in the scoping document. There were a wide range of priorities identified by different groups, including, infrastructure provision, environmental protection, housing and employment growth and meeting the District's needs plus any unmet needs from neighbouring authorities.
- 3.2.4 It is noted and understood that from the responses received there are some priorities that compete against each other, particularly across the respondent groups. The Council will consider the new and suggested amendments and balance these, as appropriate, during the preparation of the Local Plan. Ultimately, the priorities will shape the vision for the Local Plan; the aims and objectives; the spatial strategy; allocated sites; and local policies. These matters will be the focus of future consultations.

3.3 Vision and objectives – Questions 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b

- 3.3.1 The vision and objectives section of the scoping document (section 4) explored what a local plan vision is; feedback on the comments received from the DDS consultation relating to the vision; and suggested potential aims and objectives for feedback covering infrastructure delivery; brownfield and town centre living; protection and enhancement of biodiversity, landscape and green/blue infrastructure; safeguarding settlement identity; sustainable transport options; affordable and balanced housing mix; town centre and local centres; and healthy, safe, inclusive places with supporting services and facilities. The tables below provide a summary of matters raised and underneath BDC's response to questions 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b.

Question 2a: Do you agree that the Local Plan should contain a distinct, Local Plan-specific vision rather than utilising the Council Plan vision? Yes / No / Unsure

Responses: 181

- Yes: 89%
- No: 3%
- Unsure: 8%

Question 2b: We would be interested to hear additional themes that you think the vision should contain.

Responses: 131

Summary of matters raised

Public responses

- Greater emphasis should be placed on protecting the Green Belt, countryside, agricultural land, biodiversity, wildlife habitats, landscape character and the distinct identity of Bromsgrove's towns and villages, including preventing urban sprawl and settlement coalescence.
- Development should be infrastructure-led, with roads, schools, healthcare facilities, drainage, utilities, parking and public transport improvements delivered before or alongside growth. Several respondents considered that growth should remain proportionate to the capacity of existing infrastructure and services.
- Brownfield land, vacant buildings and town centre regeneration opportunities should be prioritised before the release of Green Belt or other greenfield land.
- The vision should contain stronger commitments relating to climate change mitigation and adaptation, including low-carbon development, renewable energy, sustainable construction, water efficiency, flood resilience, sustainable drainage and the protection and enhancement of ecological networks.
- Greater emphasis should be placed on protecting and enhancing open spaces, leisure facilities, recreation opportunities, sports provision and community assets which support physical health, mental wellbeing and community cohesion.
- Support for vibrant town and village centres, local businesses, agriculture and rural enterprises, employment opportunities and sustainable economic growth, alongside greater emphasis on active travel, walking, cycling and reducing traffic congestion.
- The vision should contain clearer commitments, measurable outcomes and greater accountability, with communities having a stronger role in shaping and monitoring future development.
- Reflect the implications of Local Government Reorganisations, wider strategic planning matters, cross-boundary working and coordination with neighbouring authorities, including the role of regional transport infrastructure.
- Provide a balanced, genuinely affordable range of homes.

Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses

- Sport England – supports the preparation of a distinct Local Plan vision and considers that the vision should set out how growth, infrastructure, health, environmental quality and sustainable communities will be delivered through planning policies and investment decisions.
- Sport England – recommends the vision explicitly references active and healthy communities, sport, recreation and physical activity opportunities,

healthy placemaking, active travel, connected neighbourhoods, access to high-quality sports facilities and open spaces, and reducing health inequalities through planning and development.
• Sport England – suggests the vision could include wording such as “Bromsgrove will be an active, healthy and inclusive district where residents of all ages and abilities have access to high-quality sport, recreation, leisure, open space and active travel opportunities that support physical and mental wellbeing.”
• Community Campaigner – support for traditional architecture and placemaking principles, including the use of traditional materials, enhanced landscaping and tree planting, greater protection and restoration of heritage assets, and heritage-led regeneration to reinforce Bromsgrove’s character while supporting housing delivery, environmental quality, biodiversity and economic growth.
• Wyre Forest District Council – recommend a standalone theme relating to climate covering adaptation and resilience.
• Natural England; National Trust – support a stronger focus on climate change adaptation and resilience, nature recovery, biodiversity enhancement, green and blue infrastructure, ecosystem services and access to green space, recognising the benefits for environmental sustainability, public health and wellbeing, and wider landscape connectivity.
• West Midlands Housing Association Planning Consortium – the aims and objectives should include a clear commitment to meeting the District’s housing needs and place greater emphasis on maximising affordable housing delivery.
• NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board – support a stronger emphasis on primary and community healthcare capacity within the vision, alongside schools, community facilities and wider infrastructure, recognising the implications of an ageing population and increasing health needs.
• Worcestershire County Council – consider the vision should place greater emphasis on healthy communities, age-friendly neighbourhoods, reducing health inequalities, independent living and accessible environment.
• Historic England – consider the vision should better recognise the social, economic and environmental benefits of heritage and the contribution of the historic environment to the future development of the District.
• Rowney Green association – agree with this good and ambitious content for the plan’s aims and objectives. Progress will need to be monitored for each against specified time scales with regular reporting of results.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
• Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey, Barberry Bromsgrove Limited, and Pierpont Rose Holdings Ltd; Turley obo BDW Trading Ltd (Redrow); PKR Planning Ltd; Lichfields obo UKLD (Bromsgrove) Ltd, St Philips Land Ltd, Landra Developments Ltd; Delta Planning obo Bloor Homes Western, Maximus; Cerda Planning obo Riva Land (Wythall) Ltd; Define Planning & Design Ltd obo Ashberry Strategic Land, Bloor Homes Western; Tetra Tech obo Miller Homes; Deloitte obo Church Commissioners for England; Savills obo Bellway Strategic Land; Savills obo Miller Homes Limited; Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes; Evolve Planning obo Seven Homes; IM Land; Cerda Planning obo Ashberry Strategic Land part of Bellway Homes Ltd; Boyer obo Cala Homes (Chiltern); Carter Jonas obo Persimmon Homes South Midlands; Nexus Planning obo Lone Star Land; Star Planning obo Richborough – support the preparation of a distinct Local Plan vision and considered that it should recognise Bromsgrove’s role in meeting both its own housing needs and unmet housing needs arising across the wider Housing Market Area. Respondents considered that sustainable growth, housing delivery and a clear strategy for meeting development needs should be key components of the

vision. Some also support the inclusion of measurable outcomes to monitor delivery of the vision.
Harris Lamb obo Terra Strategic, Barratt Redrow, the Church Commissioners for England, Bloor Homes and Birmingham Property Group Holdings ('The Joint Consortium'); Chave Planning obo Nurton Developments (Catshill) Ltd; Savills obo JT Cocks Settlement Trust; Lichfields obo Landra Developments Ltd, CDF100 Ltd – support a Local Plan vision aligned with national planning policy that addresses cross-boundary matters, including unmet housing and employment needs arising from neighbouring authorities and the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area, directs growth to sustainable locations, supports infrastructure delivery and economic growth, and recognises Bromsgrove's strategic role within wider sub-regional planning initiatives.
Simply Planning – the vision should contain housing need & supply; promoting sustainable development including development within the Green Belt; and infrastructure provision.
Bidwells obo Generator; Pegasus Group obo Catesby Estates – the vision should acknowledge that to meet the District's housing needs it will require Green Belt release.
Bidwells obo Generator – suggested measurable outcomes: net housing completions against the requirement; affordable housing completions against identified need, disaggregated by tenure; the proportion of new homes within a defined walking or cycling catchment of a railway station or a high frequency bus service; and delivery of each item of strategic infrastructure against its trigger point.
Indurent Strategic Land Ltd – consider that the vision should place greater emphasis on economic growth, inward investment, industrial and logistics development, high-quality employment opportunities and supporting a modern economy.
Turley obo BDW Trading (Redrow) – the purpose of a vision within a Local Plan, whilst aligned, differs significantly from that of a Council Plan.
Midland Land Limited – consider the vision should include provision for an ageing population, specialist older persons accommodation, extra care housing and the release of under-occupied family housing through downsizing and rightsizing opportunities.
Pegasus Group obo Catesby Estates – the Council Plan vision does not cover the whole Local Plan period and is ambiguous and does not include a framework for meeting housing needs and addressing other economic, social and environmental priorities.
Pegasus Group obo Catesby Estates – suggest measurable outcomes that include provision of development in sustainable locations; meeting housing needs of the district and unmet needs from neighbouring areas; deliver a variety of homes for different groups; deliver the employment land requirements in full; deliver accessible green and open space and sports facilities; contribute to net zero; and infrastructure delivery.

BDC's response:

- 3.3.2 The Local Plan vision will describe what Bromsgrove District should be like at the end of the Local Plan period, providing the direction for how the District should grow and change. It responds to the priorities and challenges and provides the direction for the Local Plan's aims and objectives; spatial strategy; site allocations; and planning policies.

- 3.3.3 The overwhelming majority of respondents support the development of a distinct, Local Plan-specific vision rather than utilising the current Council Plan vision. Respondents provided a wide array of themes the vision should contain, with some similarities with the priorities and challenges. Common themes include Green Belt protection, timely infrastructure delivery, climate adaptation, and sustainable development to meet the District's housing needs and the unmet needs of neighbouring authorities. As with the priorities and challenges, there are some competing vision themes, particularly across respondent groups, that the Council will need to balance when preparing the vision. Using the feedback received to date, a proposed vision will be consulted on at the next local plan content and evidence consultation.

Question 3a: Do you agree with the proposed aims and objectives? Yes / No / Unsure

Responses: 176

- Yes: 53%
- No: 26%
- Unsure: 21%

Question 3b: Are there any aims and objectives that you would change, add or delete? Please explain your answer.

Responses: 127

Summary of matters raised

Public responses

- Protect the Green Belt, Countryside, wildlife habitats, mature trees and landscape character.
- Resist development which would undermine settlement identity, lead to urban sprawl or result in the coalescence of communities.
- Reflect the implications of Local Government Reorganisation and wider strategic planning matters within the objectives.
- Include clearer commitments, measurable outcomes, implementation mechanisms and timescales, with greater community involvement in planning decisions.
- Improve road safety, pedestrian safety, public transport and traffic management, whilst ensuring development is located in sustainable locations.
- Prioritise brownfield land, vacant buildings, the re-use of redundant commercial buildings and town centre regeneration before releasing Green Belt or other greenfield land for development.
- Ensure infrastructure, including roads, schools, healthcare facilities, drainage, utilities, parking and public transport, is delivered before or alongside development, with sufficient capacity demonstrated in advance.
- Assess the cumulative impacts of development and ensure the scale of growth remains proportional to the size, character and infrastructure capacity of individual settlements, whilst protecting settlement identity and community wellbeing.
- Protect and enhance leisure, recreation and community facilities, including sports facilities, open spaces, playgrounds and community assets, and ensure any replacement provision is of equivalent or better quality and quantity.

• Support high-quality design, placemaking, heritage conservation and the protection of historic buildings and local character.
• Strengthen support for local businesses, employment opportunities, digital infrastructure, town centre vitality, food production and affordable housing in rural communities.
• Provide a balanced housing mix that meets local needs, including home for the first-time buyers, families and older people.
• The text under “Deliver healthy, safe, inclusive places with adequate services and facilities” should be amended to read: “Secure sufficient school places, healthcare capacity and community facilities, and protect sports and leisure assets to support physical and mental wellbeing. Where a sports and leisure asset is to be replaced, the replacement must be of an equal or better quantity and quality” to accord with national policy.
Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses
• Wyre Forest District Council – suggest additional objectives relating to climate change, heritage assets, the Worcestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, active travel and cross-boundary working.
• Sport England – recommend a specific objective relating to active communities through the protection, enhancement and delivery of sport, recreation and physical activity infrastructure.
• Sport England – suggest strengthening infrastructure, healthy communities and sustainable transport objectives through greater recognition of sport and recreation infrastructure, improved walking, wheeling and cycling networks, and reducing health inequalities.
• Sport England – suggest measurable outcomes relating to open space, playing fields, sports facilities, active travel, participation in physical activity and the delivery of sports infrastructure alongside growth.
• Community Campaigner – support the inclusion of traditional architecture design codes, stronger placemaking principles, enhanced landscaping and tree planting, and greater protection and restoration of historic buildings and heritage assets.
• Worcestershire Wildlife Trust – support the biodiversity objective but recommended specific reference to the Worcestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
• Natural England – should include the natural environment and be based on local characteristics and circumstances and include locally specific goals for nature recovery and enhancement, supported by policies and proposals.
• National Trust – consider that Green Belt objectives should have greater regard to public access, recreation, nature recovery and the beneficial use requirements of the NPPF. The Regional Park is identified as a potential mechanism to help deliver these outcomes alongside improved green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancements.
• NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board – recommend measurable outcomes relating to healthcare infrastructure and capacity, to ensure the relationship between growth and healthcare provision can be monitored throughout the plan period.
• Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council – the proposed aims are inherently inward looking and do not consider the role of Bromsgrove within a wider economic geography, and how the Plan should respond to cross boundary issues such as infrastructure and accommodating unmet housing and employment land needs, in the determination of the plan’s housing requirement and spatial strategy. In addition to the aims and objectives, the spatial strategy should reflect the functional linkages with the West Midlands conurbation.
• Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council – request to be kept informed and engaged in the preparation of the IDP and cross-boundary issues.

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council – request that any proposed allocations in close proximity to Dudley borough consider the potential impacts on the landscape, historic environments and biodiversity assets.
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council – need to consider the requirements of Gypsy and Traveller communities and Travelling Showpeople. Emerging evidence indicates that accommodation shortfalls are arising across parts of the conurbation and in neighbouring authorities, including South Staffordshire.
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council – advocates identifying employment land requirements, ensuring that sufficient land is allocated not only to meet Bromsgrove’s own economic development needs but also consider the potential to support unmet employment land requirements arising from neighbouring Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMAs).
Historic England – consider the aims and objectives should explicitly recognise the contribution of the historic environment and heritage assets to delivering the Local Plan’s priorities, aims and objectives.
Environment Agency – infrastructure and utilities, especially water availability and foul drainage should be brought forward in advance of development without causing deterioration of any watercourse. Recommend a water cycle study.
Environment Agency – regarding brownfield development, ensure a potentially contaminated site is deliverable and allocation numbers can be achieved.
Environment Agency – greener and more environmentally resilient, including green corridors could refer to the LNRS as an important tool in understanding areas of opportunity for biodiversity and ecological enhancements.
Environment Agency – emphasise the importance of the water environment (ponds, rivers, streams, wetlands) as part of the nature-based strategy and to further highlight the benefits from integrating blue and green infrastructure (urban cooling, carbon sequestration, natural flood management, nature recovery) even at a small scale (e.g. green walls & roofs, SuDS).
Environment Agency – delivering high quality, sustainable designs could seek to include water efficiency / water recycling measures and energy efficiency. We expect the water efficiency standard required in local plan policy for all new residential developments to be designed to utilise no more than 100 litres per person per day, or future successor standards where more stringent.
Environment Agency – should consider increasing requirements for BNG beyond national minimum. Higher BNG targets encourages more ambitious and effective habitat creation, restoration, and connectivity within developments. This would help offset the cumulative impact of growth and contribute to long-term ecological resilience and nature recovery.
Environment Agency – applying the flood risk sequential test early in the selection of growth strategies and sites, will provide the best chance of district wide or catchment climate change resilience and means safer communities, less reliance on current flood risk and drainage infrastructure.
Environment Agency – identify climate change as a priority and to align policies with national net zero targets and mitigation policies. Welcome consideration of renewable energy provision.
Rowney Green Association – we agree with this good and ambitious content for the plan’s aims and objectives. Progress will need to be monitored for each against specified timescales with regular reporting of results.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
Chave Planning obo Nurton Developments (Catshill) Ltd – question whether masterplanning larger sites is the most appropriate mechanism for safeguarding settlement identity as it seems more related to ensuring well-connected and walkable neighbourhoods.

Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey, Barberry Bromsgrove Limited, Pierpont Rose Holdings Ltd, Terra Strategic, Bloor Homes (Western) and the Joint Consortium; Savills obo JT Cocks Settlement Trust; Lichfields obo UKLD (Bromsgrove) Ltd, St Philips Land Ltd; Delta Planning obo Bloor Homes Western and Maximus; Define Planning & Design Ltd obo Ashberry Strategic Land and Bloor Homes Western; Deloitte obo Church Commissioners for England; Savills obo Bellway Strategic Land; Lichfields obo Landra Developments Ltd; Savills obo Miller Homes Limited; Bellway Homes Limited / Woosington One Limited and Persimmon Homes; IM Land, Evolve Planning obo Seven Homes; CBRE obo Bournville Village Trust (BVT); Boyer obo Cala Homes (Chiltern); Carter Jonas obo Persimmon Homes South Midlands – object to the objective of reducing Green Belt release. Consider that the objective should instead support a review of Green Belt and Grey Belt land to ensure development needs can be met in accordance with national planning policy.
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey, Barberry Bromsgrove Limited, Pierpont Rose Holdings Ltd and Bloor Homes (Western); Evolve Planning obo Seven Homes – support prioritising brownfield and town centre development but consider that the objectives should also support housing delivery in sustainable locations, close to services, facilities and public transport.
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey, Barberry Bromsgrove Limited, Pierpont Rose Holdings Ltd and Bloor Homes (Western) – consider that biodiversity objectives should reflect the statutory requirement for a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain and that any higher requirements should be justified and deliverable.
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey and Pierpont Rose Holdings Ltd – support stronger references to sustainable transport, active travel and development located close to public transport infrastructure.
Carter Jonas; Twenty5 Planning Ltd obo Lagan Homes; and Simply Planning Ltd – support directing development towards sustainable settlements and locations with good public transport accessibility.
Blenheim Strategic Partners – consider that infrastructure delivery should be realistic and deliverable and that infrastructure should not act as a constraint on development.
PKR Planning Ltd – consider that references to "potential" aims and objectives should be removed to provide greater certainty.
Bidwells obo Generator – the housing growth objective should refer to housing need rather than requirement. The requirement is what the plan will set and meeting local housing need in full is calculated using the standard method.
Bidwells obo Generator – the brownfield objective should be retilled to “Make the best use of brownfield and town centre capacity, and release Green Belt land where required to meet identified needs in full.”. Note of realism about town centre capacity that higher density town centre schemes are currently very difficult to deliver.
Bidwells obo Generator – strengthen the masterplanning objective to make clear that masterplanning of strategic allocations is comprehensive across the whole allocation irrespective of land ownership. Additionally, require that primary access and movement infrastructure is delivered to and through all development parcels within an allocation.
RCA Regeneration Ltd obo St Phillips, Ms P Wesner – consider that the Plan should respond positively to housing affordability pressures, direct growth towards sustainable locations with existing services and infrastructure, and ensure that climate change and net zero policies remain deliverable and viability-tested.
Lichfields obo Landra Developments Ltd – consider that the Plan should contain an objective that makes explicit reference to working collaboratively

with neighbouring authorities in the West Midlands to facilitate cross-boundary growth.
Lichfields obo CDF100 Ltd – recommends that the proposed objective to “prioritise brownfield and town centre capacity, reducing Green Belt release” be deleted. This objective conflicts with the Council’s own acknowledgment that “brownfield capacity in Bromsgrove district is very limited and significant Green Belt release will still be required” in the following sentence.
Turley obo BDW (Redrow) – raises concern with the aim to “prioritise and town-centre capacity, reducing Green Belt release.” Whilst brownfield-first is an important principle, it is already acknowledged within the scoping consultation that brownfield capacity in Bromsgrove district is very limited and significant Green Belt release will still be required.
Delta Planning obo Maximus – stronger emphasis on economic growth and employment land provision alongside housing growth to meet the District’s needs. The scoping document includes the aim to ‘support a thriving town centre and resilient local economy’, but this objective seems to be strongly focused on the regeneration of Bromsgrove town centre.
Midland Land Limited – support a specific objective relating to extra care and housing-with-care provision, including quantified delivery targets and monitoring mechanisms. Consider that facilitating downsizing and reducing under-occupation of family homes should be recognised as contributing to housing supply.

BDC’s response:

3.3.4 The Government’s Local Plan guidance outlines that the vision statement should include and be split into clear and focussed paragraphs based on specific aims and objectives. The aims and objectives should be ambitious but achievable, recognising the scope of what the Local Plan’s planning policies can shape and deliver. Up to 10 measurable outcomes will be established to assess progress towards delivering the vision.

3.3.5 It is noted that just over half of respondents agree with the proposed aims and objectives. Respondents highlighted a wide range of aims and objectives, some of which are already covered by the identified proposed aims and objectives in the document, for example, providing the infrastructure required to support future growth. Respondents raised some new objectives and amendments which will be considered as we prepare the aims and objectives to be consulted on at the next local plan content and evidence consultation.

3.4 Local Plan topic-based content – Questions 4a, 4b, 5a and 5b

3.4.1 The local plan topic-based content section of the scoping document (section 5) explored current and emerging national policy in the NPPF (at the time of the publication of the scoping consultation, the August 2026 version of the NPPF was not published). The section sought feedback on the indicative content of the new-style Bromsgrove District Local Plan and the potential topic-based policies the Local Plan could contain. The tables below provide a summary of matters raised and underneath BDC’s response to questions 4a, 4b, 5a and 5b.

Question 4a: Do you agree with the possible content of the Bromsgrove District Local Plan? Yes / No / Unsure

Responses: 177

- Yes: 61%
- No: 15%
- Unsure: 24%

Question 4b: Is there anything you would change, add or delete?

Responses: 112

Summary of matters raised

Public responses

- Ensure new housing is built in preparation for a globally warmed climate. Utilise whatever technologies are necessary to make houses habitable including heat pumps, air con etc.
- Prioritise brownfield land over Green Belt. The plans content must include a legally binding infrastructure delivery plan that completely excludes rural villages from large-scale allocations (500+ homes).
- The actual consultation does not explain nor provide a list of possible content for the Local Plan.
- Should include settlement-specific chapters (e.g. Barnt Green), site-specific evidence summaries, and a dedicated Green Belt Strategy. There should also be transport modelling.
- The Local Plan content should be strengthened by adding protection of established leisure and recreational assets, recognising their importance for public health, active lifestyles, youth engagement, and community cohesion.
- Full transparency of evidence, including developer submissions, viability assessments, environmental studies, and transport modelling.
- Consideration of the cumulative impacts of nearby developments in neighbouring authorities.
- Impossible to fully agree until the final National Planning Policy Framework is published and the detailed Local Plan policies are available.
- The Bromsgrove Local Plan is defunct due to Local Government Reorganisation.
- Any new approved building is not started until those building sites already in progress are finished. Limiting the disruptions to infrastructure.
- A dedicated Digital Infrastructure policy should promote full-fibre broadband, reliable mobile connectivity and smart infrastructure to support modern businesses, education, healthcare and home working across both urban and rural communities.
- Environmental policies should be expanded to include Nature Recovery, promoting connected wildlife corridors, woodland creation, river restoration, green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancement beyond the statutory minimum requirements. The Plan should also include a water resources and water security policy.
- Housing policies should place greater emphasis on high-quality, energy-efficient and adaptable homes, including accessible housing, Lifetime Homes, specialist accommodation for older people, homes suitable for home working and high standards of design and sustainability.
- Each topic-based policy should be supported by clear monitoring indicators and measurable outcomes to enable progress to be assessed throughout the Plan period.

• Economic policies should recognise the changing nature of employment. The Local Plan should include policies promoting the Circular Economy, encouraging the reuse of buildings and materials, sustainable construction, waste reduction and resource efficiency.
• Policies to protect the District's best agricultural land and supporting local food production.
• This impacts heavily on the Birmingham area as this sits on the border.
• The number of new homes is unclear. The earlier figure was too high and disproportionate.
• Need to ensure that green transport is realistic, feasible and accurate e.g. walking distances and safe cycle routes that have been reported are not accurate or realistic for people to use in their everyday lives.
• A firm control on the businesses on our High Street, improved checks to ensure all businesses are of a legal and bona fide type.
• There is no mention of what has now become known as a Grey Belt, this should be included and referred to in all of the Plans etc and formerly opposed.
• Conservation areas must be protected.
Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses
• Community Campaigner – traditional architecture design codes should be a central component. Non-Designated Heritage Assets and unclassified historic buildings should also be given full protection.
• Sport England – the description of the spatial strategy should explicitly acknowledge the role of the Green Belt, and that land allocations and designations may include the release of suitable and sustainable Green Belt.
• Canal & River Trust – may have data which might be of use in the preparation of the local plan. This can be accessed at https://data-canalrivertrust.opendata.arcgis.com.
• Alvechurch Parish Council – greater emphasis on 'local' needs and requirements of each specific village or Parish, and not just a District wide approach. The vision and requirements of Bromsgrove town, or the greater populated Parishes of Hagley or Wythall, are very different to those of Alvechurch or smaller adjoining Parishes such as Barnt Green or Beoley.
• National Trust – consider that green infrastructure should be explicitly recognised within the Local Plan and support inclusion of the Regional Park as part of the wider green infrastructure network. Development should contribute towards accessible green spaces, recreation opportunities and the delivery of wider environmental benefits.
• NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board – support inclusion of infrastructure provision within the Local Plan and consider healthcare infrastructure requirements should be explicitly identified within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
• Historic England – recommend locally specific content relating to the historic environment, heritage assets, local distinctiveness and place identity, and how these can positively influence future growth and development.
• Rowney Green Association – if paragraph 54 indicates a ranking of policies, the site allocation policies needs to move to the beginning. Site allocation is where the current controversy rests, and these policies (including inevitable Green Belt release/grey belt designation) affect many of the others very significantly.
• Environment Agency – the spatial strategy should reference flood risk, provision of infrastructure (water supply and foul drainage) and consideration of climate change.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses

• Turley obo BDW Trading Ltd (Redrow); Lichfields obo UKLD (Bromsgrove) Ltd; Delta Planning obo Bloor Homes Western, Maximus; Define Planning & Design Ltd obo Ashberry Strategic Land and Bloor Homes Western – recognised that the revised NPPF had not been published. It is prudent and critical that the content, including proposed policies, be reviewed to ensure that these accord with the requirements of the revised NPPF.
• Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpy, Barberry Bromsgrove Ltd, Terra Strategic, Bloor Homes Western, The Joint Consortium – largely agree with the content of the Local Plan, subject to further review in relation to all of the plan-making policies in the recently published 2026 Framework. We do not propose any changes as long as any local topic-based policies do not seek to duplicate or overlap with national decision-making policies. Local policies must be necessary and justified.
• Bidwells obo Generator – include a settlement hierarchy that defines the role and function of each settlement.
• Indurent Strategic Land Ltd – consider that the Local Plan should identify sufficient employment land to meet future industrial and logistics needs and include a clear spatial strategy for employment growth.
• Tetra Tech obo Miller Homes – consider the Local Plan should include locally specific content relating to settlement hierarchy, housing allocations, Green Belt boundary changes, site capacities, affordable housing requirements and monitoring and delivery mechanisms.
• Deloitte obo Church Commissioners for England – support inclusion of a clear spatial strategy, housing and employment allocations, infrastructure delivery mechanisms, affordable housing policies, Green Belt and Grey Belt policies, and monitoring and delivery frameworks.
• Savills obo Bellway Strategic Land, Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes; IM Land – consider the Local Plan should place greater emphasis on meeting housing and affordable housing needs in full and recognise long-term housing under-delivery across the District.
• Lichfields obo Landra Developments Ltd – agrees these will likely be the most relevant policy areas the Plan can address. The housing policies should establish the District's housing need figure and means to surpass it with a buffer.
• Lichfields obo CDF100 Ltd – advises these policies be prepared grounded in the latest evidence, making direct reference to the evidence base so as to clearly explain their rationale. Additionally, encourage the Council to ensure these policies reflect the incoming Spatial Development Strategy for the West Midlands Combined Authority.
• Evolve Planning obo Seven Homes – strongly supports the identification of housing delivery, the establishment of a spatial strategy including the level of homes to be provided and specific allocation as a key aspect of the local plan.
• Midland Land Limited – consider the Local Plan should include specific content relating to specialist older persons housing, extra care accommodation, housing-with care, site selection criteria for specialist housing campuses and associated monitoring arrangements.
• Delta Planning obo Maximus – the spatial strategy should be informed by a comprehensive review of the District's Green Belt to identify the most suitable and sustainable locations for economic growth.
• Boyer obo Cala Homes (Chiltern) – support inclusion of a clear spatial strategy, housing allocations, infrastructure delivery mechanisms and monitoring arrangements consistent with national policy requirements.
• Stantec Planning obo IM Land – support a spatial strategy focused on larger sustainable settlements and consider a range of site sizes should be allocated

to support delivery throughout the plan period and reduce reliance on a small number of strategic sites.
Star Planning obo Richborough – Green Belt is a planning policy tool rather than a physical constraint to growth. The absence of significant urban regeneration sites and brownfield sites inevitably means that Green Belt land will need to be released.

BDC's response:

- 3.4.2 Some respondents misunderstood this question, with some focusing on potential policy areas (which is the focus of questions 5a and 5b) rather than the structure and content of the Local Plan. There were however comments about specific elements of the Local Plan's content, such as the spatial strategy.
- 3.4.3 The publication of the August 2026 NPPF has provided greater certainty about the content requirements of local plans under the new plan-making system, as the NPPF was still in draft form when the scoping consultation was publicised. The consultation responses to date, together with the requirements of the August 2026 NPPF, will inform the content of the Local Plan and will be reflected in the next consultation on plan content and supporting evidence.

Question 5a: Do you agree with the topic-based policies that the Bromsgrove District Local Plan could contain? Yes / No / Unsure

Responses: 173

- Yes: 61%
- No: 10%
- Unsure: 29%

Question 5b: Is there anything you would change, add or delete?

Responses: 86

Summary of matters raised

Public responses

- Strengthen policies to strictly uphold the NPPF's 'exceptional circumstances' test, preventing the disproportionate expansion and urbanisation of historic village boundaries.
- Mandate that developers install Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) that guarantee a zero-net-increase in surface water runoff.
- Provision of playgrounds, sports facilities and green space within walking distance of new housing developments.
- Design is too generic and buzzword incorporation. The policy should contain the following: design code and standards; this should be a usable policy and design document. Additionally, design should also cover amenity.
- All site allocations should be supported by independently verified evidence covering highways, healthcare, education, utilities, drainage, flood risk, biodiversity and environmental capacity.

Infrastructure commitments should be monitored annually and reported publicly so that communities can see whether promised improvements have been delivered.
The Local Plan should require cumulative impact assessments rather than considering sites in isolation. Existing residents experience the combined effect of development, not individual planning applications.
The Plan should contain stronger policies preventing disproportionate growth that fundamentally alters the character, identity and function of settlements.
Must include a transparent site selection methodology, a Green Belt exceptional circumstances test, and an infrastructure first requirement.
Should include a dedicated policy protecting leisure and recreational land, ensuring that such assets are safeguarded. If loss is necessary, ensuring that there are replacement facilities of equivalent or better quality, quantity, accessibility, and cost.
Topics must include physical and mental health and wellbeing for all ages and groups and maintaining a wide-ranging infrastructure for leisure and sporting facilities.
Education and community facilities are not currently included and should be given the scoping report identifies these are important issues across BDC area.
Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses
Sport England – recommends the inclusion of specific policies addressing protection and enhancement of sports facilities, provision of sport and recreation infrastructure, and active design and healthy communities.
Worcestershire Wildlife Trust – recommend a specific mention of biodiversity. In the context of LNRS there will be a need for locally-specific policies as well as those set out in NDMPs.
Worcestershire Wildlife Trust – recommend a specific section on monitoring of plan outcomes and requirements for long term management of environmental assets where these fall outside requirements of the NPPF.
Swifts Local Network: Swifts & Planning Group – swift bricks should be included in developments in line with the August 2026 NPPF and NPPG. House martins are a significant species in Bromsgrove with good availability of vegetated and waterside areas for foraging.
Natural England – inclusion of strategic policies covering: Geodiversity and Biodiversity; Designated sites; Biodiversity Net Gain; Green and Blue Infrastructure; Local Nature Recovery Strategy; Water Quality and Resources and Flood Risk Management; Protecting Best and Most Versatile Land; Protected Landscapes; Connecting People with Nature; and Health and Wellbeing.
Natural England – should contain policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts. Many habitats provide essential ecosystem services to allow adaptation to climate change e.g. natural flood management, as well as mitigation e.g. through tree planting and retaining peat as a carbon store.
Natural England – policies should address water use, promote sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), water sensitive design as part of a wider green infrastructure approach, and water efficiency/reuse measures.
Natural England – recommend policies reflect the 5 headline Green Infrastructure Standards (Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard; Accessible Greenspace Standards; Urban Nature Recovery Standard; Urban Greening Factor; and Urban Tree Canopy Cover) in Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework Principles and Standards for England.
Natural England – embedding green infrastructure into walking and cycling routes can encourage the uptake of active travel, supporting increased physical activity, improved air quality and the reduction in vehicular traffic. Creating

green corridors assists with urban cooling and increases people's opportunities to connect with nature.
Natural England – note the importance that nature plays in supporting our health and wellbeing. Advise increasing access to urban green space; ensure availability and access to a variety of green and blue spaces (parks, playgrounds, woodlands, community gardens, allotments, water features, etc.); improve the quality of existing green and blue spaces; and include community gardens and food growing spaces.
West Midlands Housing Association Planning Consortium – welcome the proposed housing-related policies and consider they should place a strong emphasis on affordable housing delivery and meeting identified local housing needs.
Fisher German obo National Grid Electricity Transmission – do not propose any topic-based policies at this stage, however, it is recommend that in future iterations of the Local Plan, site specific policies identified to be encumbered by NGET assets or an appropriate overarching policy (such as one setting out approach to design of development) include wording which appropriately recognises and responds to the presence of NGET assets.
NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board – recommend locally specific policies relating to healthcare infrastructure, including developer contributions towards healthcare capacity, Health Impact Assessments for major development, support for healthcare premises, and recognition of the healthcare implications of specialist and older persons' housing.
Historic England – recommend policies relating to the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings, including policies that help reinforce Bromsgrove's local character and identity.
Rowney Green Association – if paragraph 54 indicates a ranking of policies, the site allocation policies needs to move to the beginning. Site allocation is where the current controversy rests, and these policies (including inevitable Green Belt release/grey belt designation) affect many of the others very significantly.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
Harris Lamb obo the Joint Consortium, Bloor Homes Western, Barberry Bromsgrove Limited, Pierpont Rose Holdings Ltd, Asset Storage Limited, Aniston Limited; Lichfields obo UKLD (Bromsgrove) Ltd, St Philips Land Ltd; Delta Planning obo Bloor Homes Western & Maximus, Define Planning & Design Ltd obo Ashberry Strategic Land and Bloor Homes Western; Star Planning obo Richborough – largely agree that the topic-based policies are appropriate, subject to a review against the new NPPF (2026) so as to avoid duplication.
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpy, Joint Consortium, Barberry Bromsgrove Limited, Terra Strategic – seek to clarify or amend any design-based policies. Wish to avoid a topic-based policy that do not mirror the national decision-making policies on design.
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey Strategic – an additional policy may be required if the Council decide to work with adjoining neighbours to assist with meeting unmet need arising from elsewhere within the HMA.
Turley obo BDW Trading (Redrow) – there is a need to ensure that the housing requirement is evidence-led. A balanced spatial strategy should be prepared, which provides for a range of site sizes and locations, including small, medium and strategic sites.
Savills obo JT Cocks Settlement Trust – consider the Local Plan should place greater emphasis on employment growth and include specific consideration of freight and logistics development in accordance with national planning policy.

• Bidwells obo Generator – suggest locally specific policies: comprehensive development of strategic allocations (agreed masterplan or design code covering the whole allocation prior to determination); infrastructure cost, apportionment and equalisation; Green Belt (define boundaries), grey belt (identification) and safeguarded land; and local centres in new communities.
• Indurent Strategic Land Ltd – policies should recognise the locational and operational requirements of industrial and logistics development, including strategic employment sites with good access to the Strategic Road Network.
• Tetra Tech obo Miller Homes; Deloitte obo Church Commissioners for England; CBRE obo Bournville Village Trust (BVT) – consider affordable housing requirements, housing needs of different groups and locally derived standards for open space and recreation should be informed by evidence and tested through viability. Policies should avoid unnecessary duplication of national policy.
• Deloitte obo Church Commissioners for England – support policies relating to affordable housing, delivery of homes for different groups, viability, health and recreation provision, and climate change, provided requirements remain evidence-led and deliverable.
• Savills obo Bellway Strategic Land, Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – support flexible, evidence-led housing policies and consider climate change, biodiversity net gain and design requirements should remain proportionate, justified and deliverable through viability testing.
• IM Land – support infrastructure-led growth but consider infrastructure requirements should be proportionate, viability-tested and capable of responding to individual site circumstances.
• Turley obo BDW Trading (Redrow) – need to ensure the housing requirement is evidence-led. A balanced spatial strategy should be prepared, which provides for a range of site sizes and locations, including small, medium and strategic sites. Sufficient housing is planned to support the delivery of affordable homes. The Plan should be informed by evidence on site availability, suitability and achievability. Consideration and approach to Green Belt release required and ensure that infrastructure is planned alongside growth.
• Midland Land Limited – support a dedicated policy relating to specialist housing for older people, including extra care and housing-with-care provision, together with consideration of affordable housing, viability and design requirements for these forms of development.
• Evolve Planning obo Seven Homes – supports the delivery of new homes, including the establishment of the housing requirement, identification of housing allocations and policies to provide specific guidance in respect of the mix of homes to be provided, including size, type and tenure.
• Boyer obo Cala Homes (Chiltern) – consider Green Belt policies should reflect the need for Green Belt and Grey Belt release to meet housing needs. Design and parking policies should remain flexible, proportionate and avoid unnecessary duplication of national policy.
• Carter Jonas obo Persimmon Homes South Midlands – consider topic-based policies should place greater emphasis on infrastructure delivery, renewable energy and nature recovery, whilst ensuring sufficient land is identified to meet housing requirements throughout the plan period.

BDC's response:

- 3.4.4 Over 60% of respondents agree with the topic-based policies that the Bromsgrove District Local Plan could contain.

- 3.4.5 Under the new plan-making system, local plans will take a different and more streamlined form than local plans prepared under the former plan-making system. They will focus on a more limited and targeted set of locally relevant policies, rather than seeking to include a broad range of planning policies historically covered by adopted local plans. This approach reflects changes to national policy.
- 3.4.6 The scoping document recognised that the draft NPPF published in December 2025 had not been finalised and that the scope and content of its proposed policies therefore remained subject to change. Now that the finalised version of the NPPF, published in August 2026, has been published the Council will continue to fully review the policies within the Framework. This will ensure the Local Plan is consistent with national policy, including not containing policies which duplicate, substantively restate or are inconsistent with the content of national decision-making policies, unless directed by other policies in the Framework, in accordance with policies PM6 and PM15. This will support the preparation of proportionate and justified policies that address local circumstances while complying with national policy.
- 3.4.7 Opportunities to provide comments on any locally specific policies and the content of the local plan will be available at the subsequent local plan content and evidence consultation stage, as well as during the proposed local plan consultation.

3.5 Local Plan evidence base – Questions 6a and 6b

- 3.5.1 The Local Plan evidence base section of the scoping document (section 6) explored the evidence base we think is required to support the production of the Local Plan. Feedback was sought on the proposed evidence base documents and any additional evidence required. The tables below provide a summary of matters raised and underneath BDC's response to questions 6a and 6b.

Question 6a: Do you agree with the scope of the proposed evidence base to support the Local Plan (table 2)? Yes / No / Unsure
Responses: 171
• Yes: 50% • No: 29% • Unsure: 21%

Question 6b: Is there any other evidence you feel we need to inform our Local Plan?
Responses: 108
<u>Summary of matters raised</u>
Public responses
• Priority should be given to updating the existing Green Belt study to be in line with the revised NPPF. This should include a Grey Belt assessment of Green Belt parcels that is sufficiently granular. Additionally, there were some requests for a Brownfield Capacity Study.

• Priority should be given to producing the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). IDP should be as explicit as possible on requirements District wide and per allocated site.
• Site Assessments should include measures of access to green spaces, sports facilities and playgrounds.
• Requests to publish evidence regarding the traffic, congestion and road safety impacts of sites. Assessments should be carried out on the cumulative impact of site allocations.
• Site allocations should include assessments of surface water drainage and sewerage capacity.
• Publish evidence provided by healthcare, education, emergency services and utilities providers. This should provide clarity on current capacity, what additional development is expected to require and how additional service provision could be accommodated.
• List of public and private entities consulted on the Local Plan.
• Include an assessment of local distinctiveness, important views and character of settlements.
• Evidence of cross boundary work with neighbouring authorities. To ensure the implications of developments adjacent to Bromsgrove District have been thoroughly considered.
• Require assessment of healthcare and education capacities and required contributions, transport assessments, flood risk assessments and other evidence required for planning applications, prior to site allocation.
• Ensure residents views from consultations are published as part of the evidence base.
• Consider the National Trust Regional Park Strategy.
• Clearly present the exceptional circumstances that require the development of Green Belt land to meet the Council's assessed housing need.
• Provide evidence on the capacity and coverage of broadband, mobile networks and highlight areas with poor access to these services.
• Update the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA).
• Ensure consistency of the evidence collected across all authorities that will comprise the North Worcestershire Council following Local Government Reorganisation.
• Provide evidence relating to job creation, green jobs and the impact of AI.
• Ensure that the impacts of climate change are properly accounted for in for all evidence base documents.
• Some comments raise concern around whether the timescales for producing the local plan and its updated evidence base are realistic.
• Provide documentation on the capacity of mental health service provision and implications on capacity and wellbeing from the scale of development.
• Consider publishing site assessments in full.
• Include evidence on the capacity and requirements for parking in local centres.
• Include a Natural Capital Assessment.
• Leisure & Recreation Needs Assessment, Playing Pitch Strategy and Built Facilities Assessment, Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Study, and Health Impact Assessment.
Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses
• Sport England: ○ supports the proposed evidence base but recommends that additional emphasis is given to the assessment of sport, recreation and physical activity needs.

○ Whilst the evidence base includes an updated Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy, Sport England recommends the preparation or update of an Indoor and Built Facilities Assessment in line with Sport England's guidance. ○ Sport England provided more detailed suggestions on what should be included within other evidence base documents including the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Evidence, Sports Facility Strategy and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
• Canal and River Trust – provided links to their datahub which can support the development of the Local Plan.
• Wyre Forest District Council – a Built Facilities Strategy could be included to support the Playing Pitch Strategy.
• Alvechurch Parish Council – study needs to be taken on the current availability of parking spaces, the effect of this on the sustainability of village centres, and the shortfall needed for village centres to remain sustainable and cater for the growth needed due to any new projected housing.
• Natural England – the strategy for allocating land for development should: avoid protected sites and apply the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy (former NPPF para 180a); give great weight to conserving and enhancing designated landscapes; and avoid the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land. Site selection evidence base should include: ○ Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments, Landscape Sensitivity Assessments and Landscape Character Assessments. ○ Soil surveys and mapping (Agricultural Land Classification available on Magic maps) ○ ecological surveys, green infrastructure and biodiversity opportunity mapping. ○ Must also be informed by the Sustainability Appraisal, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment.
• Stratford-on-Avon District Council – support the proposed evidence base and suggest that future evidence should consider wider strategic matters including unmet housing needs arising across the GBBCHMA, employment land requirements across the West Midlands, and Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showperson accommodation needs.
• National Highways – content that the proposed evidence base contains the documents relevant to its statutory responsibilities and notes the importance of the Strategic Transport Assessment and Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
• West Midlands Housing Association Planning Consortium – support preparation of an updated Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment to ensure the Local Plan is informed by up-to-date evidence on housing and affordable housing needs.
• National Trust – consider evidence relating to the Regional Park, green infrastructure, open space provision and the wider environmental, access and wellbeing benefits of connected green networks.
• NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board – support inclusion of healthcare infrastructure evidence within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Health Impact Assessment and request ongoing involvement in the preparation of these evidence base documents. Also support engagement with acute and community healthcare providers in preparing the evidence base.
• Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council – advise the West Midlands Economic Geography Report and regional/sub-regional studies are considered as part of the evidence base.
• Historic England – support preparation of Heritage Impact Assessments and recommend that site assessment work includes proportionate consideration of heritage assets and their settings. Also raise a concern regarding an aspect of the SEA Screening Statement and highlight the importance of assessing

impacts on the historic environment through the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment processes.
Rowney Green Association – the evidence collection relating to green and grey belt assessments needs to be progressed urgently given housing developers' interests now in making their own identification of land for green belt release in the absence of both a valid Bromsgrove district plan and 5 years supply of available housing land.
Environment Agency – provides guidance on Strategic Flood Risk Assessment; Water Cycle Studies (water quality and water resource); and SEA.
Worcestershire County Council – recommend greater emphasis on healthy placemaking, ageing well, landscape character and the historic environment, including use of the terminology “conserve, enhance and celebrate” in accordance with national policy
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey, Barberry Bromsgrove Limited, Pierpont Rose Holdings Ltd, Terra Strategic, Bloor Homes (Western), Asset Storage Limited and Aniston Limited and the Joint Consortium; Twenty5 Planning Ltd obo Lagan Homes; Turley obo BDW Trading Ltd (Redrow); Define Planning & Design Ltd obo Ashberry Strategic Land and Bloor Homes Western – the proposed list of evidence-base documents is broadly supported and is considered proportionate and consistent with the requirement for relevant, focused, reliable and up-to-date evidence.
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey, Barberry Bromsgrove Limited, Terra Strategic, Bloor Homes (Western), Asset Storage Limited and Aniston Limited and the Joint Consortium – suggestions that the Council should explore opportunities to prepare evidence jointly with neighbouring authorities particularly those authorities that would form the proposed North Worcestershire Council following Local Government Reorganisation.
Turley obo BDW Trading Ltd (Redrow); Lichfields obo UKLD (Bromsgrove) Ltd, Landra Developments Ltd; Delta Planning obo Bloor Homes Western, Maximus; Pegasus Group obo Catesby Estates – requests to update the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment, Green Belt evidence and undertake a Grey Belt assessment to reflect current housing needs and changes to national planning policy.
Harris Lamb obo Pierpont Rose Holdings Ltd; Evolve Planning obo Seven Homes – the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment, or a separate supporting study, should assess the wider range of housing needs for different groups required by NPPF policy HO1.
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey, Pierpont Rose Holdings Ltd, Terra Strategic, Bloor Homes (Western) – evidence should consider the relationship and needs arising across the wider Housing Market Area, including unmet needs from neighbouring or nearby authorities. With reference to Redditch Borough and the GBBCHMA Housing Market Area.
Harris Lamb obo Pierpont Rose Holdings Ltd, Terra Strategic, Bloor Homes (Western) and the Joint Consortium – as the Local Plan is being prepared before the Spatial Development Strategy, the supporting evidence should take account of any relevant emerging strategic direction, particularly in establishing housing requirements and addressing housing and employment needs.
Twenty5 Planning Ltd obo Lagan Homes; Harris Lamb obo of Terra Strategic, the Joint Consortium; Bidwells obo Generator; Delta Planning obo Maximus; Pegasus Group obo Catesby Estates; Boyer obo Cala Homes (Chiltern) – the previous Green Belt Assessment and Green Belt Study should be updated to reflect significant changes in national planning policy. This such include a Grey

Belt assessment which does not purely supplement previous Green Belt evidence.
Harris Lamb obo Asset Storage Limited and Aniston Limited; Turley obo BDW Trading Ltd (Redrow); Bidwells obo Generator; PKR Planning Ltd – the earlier Green Belt Review should be undertaken in accordance with the methodology or requirements in Annex E of the 2026 NPPF.
Twenty5 Planning Ltd obo Lagan Homes; Pegasus Group obo Catesby Estates – the Strategic Transport Assessment should be updated following publication of the revised 2026 NPPF, particularly to include acknowledgment of ‘Well-connected’ rail stations.
Harris Lamb obo Pierpont Rose Holdings Ltd – the Infrastructure Delivery Plan should address renewable energy, the electricity network, telecommunications, water supply and wastewater infrastructure.
Turley obo BDW Trading Ltd (Redrow); Savills obo Bellway Strategic Land – the Council should explicitly identify which evidence-base documents will be newly prepared, revised or updated. Table 2 is currently unclear on this matter.
Savills obo JT Cocks Settlement Trust; Lichfields obo St Philips Land Ltd; Savills obo Miller Homes Limited, Bellway Homes Limited / Woolsington One Limited and Persimmon Homes – consider that the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment and Green Belt evidence should be updated to reflect current housing and employment requirements and changes to national planning policy. Also suggest consideration of wider housing and employment needs arising from neighbouring authorities and the wider West Midlands area.
Bidwells obo Generator – suggest additional evidence documents/clarity: Urban and brownfield capacity assessment; Safeguarded land assessment; Infrastructure cost apportionment within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan; Whole plan viability assessment; Education and health capacity evidence at planning area level; Bromsgrove Railway Station access and capacity study; Strategic Transport Assessment update; Duty to co-operate and cross-boundary evidence; Housing land supply and buffer position; and HEDNA update.
Cerda Planning obo Riva Land (Wythall) Ltd – evidence should consider affordability pressures, unmet housing needs arising across the GBBCHMA and the need for a flexible housing supply, including an appropriate buffer above minimum housing requirements.
Indurent Strategic Land Ltd – consider that evidence relating to employment land requirements should be updated to reflect the West Midlands Strategic Employment Sites Study, industrial and logistics market conditions, strategic employment needs and cross-boundary economic requirements.
Tetra Tech obo Miller Homes; Deloitte obo Church Commissioners for England – recommend additional evidence relating to housing trajectory, spatial strategy options, infrastructure baseline reporting and wider housing strategies. Also support joint working on cross-boundary matters and assessment of reasonable alternatives through the Sustainability Appraisal process.
RCA Regeneration Ltd obo St Phillips – support preparation of an updated Green Belt and Grey Belt Assessment and consider the evidence base should reflect current housing requirements, affordability pressures and recent changes to national planning policy.
IM Land – key evidence relating to housing and employment needs should be updated and any Grey Belt Assessment should be sufficiently granular to properly assess land performance. Also support an Infrastructure Delivery Plan identifying responsibilities, funding mechanisms and delivery phasing.

Lichfields obo CDF100 Ltd – the Council must reflect their current housing shortage; the Council can only demonstrate a 2.24 year supply of housing land (as of April 2026) and scored just 58% in the 2025 Housing Delivery Test. Encourage the Council to update their HEDNA to ensure that the Plan is underpinned by up-to-date information, reflecting the needs of the District and the wider Black Country FEMA. This will ensure the Council can plan for sufficient growth to meet the District's and wider area's employment needs.
Midland Land Limited – consider the evidence base should specifically assess specialist older persons housing needs, extra care accommodation, housing-with care provision, under-occupation of family housing and the role of downsizing in meeting housing needs. Also support additional viability evidence relating to specialist housing and monitoring of extra care delivery.
Evolve Planning obo Seven Homes – support the robust Site Assessment and Site Selection Methodology document.
CBRE obo Bournville Village Trust (BVT) – support preparation of updated housing need evidence, housing trajectory work, spatial strategy options and Grey Belt assessment to ensure the Local Plan can meet housing needs and maintain a deliverable supply of land.

BDC's response:

3.5.2 It is acknowledged that only 50% of respondents agree with the evidence base to support the Local Plan. Assessing the responses received, it is understood that some respondents may be prematurely disagreeing with the content specific elements of the evidence base, unknowingly requesting additional evidence that has already been identified as possible evidence, or disagreeing with the question as the final evidence base is not available for inspection at this time. As highlighted in the scoping document, new or updated evidence will be published on the Council's website when it is complete or at the time of the next consultation.

3.5.3 Some respondents also highlighted evidence base documents that we know may require updating or commissioning. A robust evidence base is essential to the preparation of a 'sound' and justified Local Plan. Suggestions for additional evidence, or for matters to be addressed through evidence already identified, will be considered as part of the plan-making process. As the Local Plan develops, it may also become necessary to prepare or commission further evidence to respond to emerging requirements.

3.6 Consultation & engagement strategy – Questions 7a, 7b, 8a, 8b and 9

3.6.1 The consultation and engagement section of the scoping document (section 7) explored and welcomed feedback on the consultation principles proposed to guide future consultation methods. The tables below provide a summary of matters raised and underneath BDC's response to questions 7a, 7b, 8a, 8b and 9.

Question 7a: Do you agree with the consultation principles identified? Yes / No / Unsure
Responses: 167
- Yes: 74% - No: 14%

- Unsure: 12%

Question 7b: What else would you suggest?

Responses: 84

Summary of matters raised

Public responses

- Face to face consultation.
- A 'Digital-first' approach is fundamentally inadequate for rural settlements.
- Would like visually recorded meetings for evidence in the future.
- Education on the process for members of the public.
- Individual development proposals have their own consultations.
- Would like a greater emphasis on transparency and accountability and how consultation responses influence the plan.
- Establish well-moderated social media forums that are not dominated by toxic voices.
- Improve access to local information regarding developments via newspapers and other community venues.
- Would like specific information about developments that will directly impact them.
- Plain English consultation material and documents.

Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses

- Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council – continue to consult with adjacent authorities and communities.
- Natural England – provide advice via a letter of response. Online consultation surveys or forms do not allow us to include all the information or links we think are important.
- NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board – support continued engagement on health and infrastructure matters and welcome early involvement in plan preparation, recognising the long lead-in times associated with healthcare infrastructure planning.

On behalf of developers and landowners responses

- Tetra Tech obo Miller Homes; Deloitte obo Church Commissioners for England; CBRE obo Bournville Village Trust (BVT) – recommend publication of evidence at the start of consultation stages, opportunities for stakeholders to comment on material changes, and workshops covering spatial strategy, site selection, infrastructure and viability evidence.
- RCA Regeneration Ltd obo St Phillips, Ms P Wesner – suggest greater engagement with under-represented groups including younger people, households in housing need, affordable housing providers, local employers and older people.
- Savills obo Bellway Strategic Land – support a clear post-consultation process setting out how key issues and representations have been considered.
- IM Land – support greater ongoing engagement with landowners, developers and infrastructure providers through developer forums, meetings and continued dialogue throughout Local Plan preparation.
- Midland Land Limited – support continued engagement with parish councils, health and adult care stakeholders and specialist housing providers during preparation of the evidence base and Local Plan.

BDC's response:

- 3.6.2 Approximately three-quarters of respondents agree with the presented consultation principles. As highlighted in the scoping document, these principles will help shape the consultation methods for future Local Plan consultations. It is recognised that not all responses to question 7b specifically address consultation principles. Some comments instead relate to consultation methods, which are considered under questions 8a and 8b.
- 3.6.3 The Council's consultation and engagement strategy will guide future Local Plan consultation principles and methods, taking into account the feedback received. The Council recognises the importance of encouraging participation from a broad and diverse range of residents, groups, consultation bodies and the development industry. Respondents have provided a number of helpful suggestions for improving engagement, which will be considered when planning future consultations.

Question 8a: Do you agree with the potential consultation methods identified? Yes / No / Unsure

Responses: 164

- Yes: 63%
- No: 15%
- Unsure: 22%

Question 8b: What potential consultation methods would you change or add? Please explain your answer.

Responses: 74

Summary of matters raised

Public responses

- Wider and more inclusive engagement.
- Try to include those who do not normally participate.
- Listen to what people say rather than making assumptions about their views beforehand.
- Consult with Parish Councils.
- Consultation should involve listening and responding at a local level.
- Interactive maps could be beneficial.
- More meetings with stakeholders.
- Staffed public exhibitions at varying times.
- Email notifications to residents.
- The reference to focus groups seemed to exclude two key groups: residents of Bromsgrove District and regular visitors to Bromsgrove District for work, shopping and leisure.

Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses

- Wyre Forest District Council – QR codes for ease of access to material.
- Community Campaigner – email and the ability to upload PDF Documents and associated research.
- NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board – request continued direct engagement throughout Local Plan preparation and early

engagement on site options and reasonable alternatives so healthcare capacity considerations can inform site selection.
Historic England – request access to complete consultation documents in PDF or Word format and the availability of GIS shape files for proposed allocations to assist detailed assessment of heritage impacts.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
Harris Lamb obo Barberry Bromsgrove Limited, Taylor Wimpey, Taylor Wimpey Strategic, Terra Strategic, Asset Storage Limited and Aniston Limited, and the Joint Consortium – suggest more innovative approaches to engage younger people and other groups who do not normally participate.
Twenty5 Planning Ltd obo Lagan Homes; Savills obo Bellway Strategic Land – engage with local housebuilders, developers and land promoters as they can provide insight into market demand, viability, deliverability and the attractiveness of locations for future growth.
Harris Lamb obo Taylor Wimpey – concern over the likely low response rate and focus from particular interest groups.
Bidwells obo Generator – establish a standing landowner and developer forum, or a small number of topic-based working groups, covering the strategic allocations, infrastructure delivery and the apportionment of infrastructure costs.
Bidwells obo Generator – where a strategic location is in more than one land ownership the Council should convene the landowners, together with WCC as highway and education authority, to agree a comprehensive masterplan, before the allocation policy is drafted.
Tetra Tech obo Miller Homes; Deloitte obo Church Commissioners for England; CBRE obo Bournville Village Trust (BVT); Carter Jonas obo Persimmon Homes South Midlands – support allowing report-style responses by email and ensuring respondents can submit information beyond prescribed consultation questions where relevant to plan preparation.
Turley obo BDW Trading (Redrow) – should continue to engage positively with adjoining authorities. Bromsgrove District does not operate in isolation.
Midland Land Limited – support continued use of email consultation and publication of responses and suggest additional guidance explaining specialist housing products and extra care accommodation to consultees.

BDC's response:

- 3.6.4 Approximately two-thirds of respondents agree with the identified consultation methods. The Council's consultation and engagement strategy will guide future Local Plan consultation principles and methods, taking into account the feedback received. The Council recognises the importance of encouraging participation from a broad and diverse range of residents, groups, consultation bodies and the development industry. Respondents have provided a number of helpful suggestions for improving engagement, which will be considered when planning future consultations.

Question 9: Do you consider there is anything else relevant to consultation that has not been mentioned?
Responses: 68
<u>Summary of matters raised</u>
Public responses

• How community-led evidence such as localised traffic logging, local flooding photographic logs, or parish-level infrastructure data will be weighted. • List answers from respondents and get them to list them in order of priority. • Emphasis on the need for open and non-prejudiced consultation. • Consideration of cross boundary developments. • Documents feel generic and have no detail on the actual questions. • Should prepare briefing sheets for Parish Councils to ensure a consistent message. • How will this benefit the residents who are currently living here. • Hagley train station is already at capacity and should not be used as a tool to promote growth in the area.
Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses
• Churchill and Blakedown Parish Council – important to feedback the outcome of consultation to those who have contributed. • Alvechurch Parish Council – Village centre car parking requirements. • Natural England – Annex A for general advice for local plans. Annex B for air quality advice. Annex C for advice relating to soils and agricultural land quality. Annex D for green infrastructure local plan policy examples. • National Highways – wishes to continue engagement on evidence base documents, particularly the Strategic Transport Assessment and Infrastructure Delivery Plan, as the Local Plan progresses. • West Midlands Housing Association Planning Consortium – encourage ongoing engagement with Registered Providers and housing associations throughout the preparation of the Local Plan to help inform evidence and housing policies. • NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board – recommend continued engagement with healthcare organisations, including acute and community healthcare providers, to ensure healthcare infrastructure requirements are reflected in the Local Plan and supporting evidence base. • Historic England – highlight Heritage Counts data and Historic England guidance as useful resources that may inform plan preparation, monitoring indicators and consideration of the historic environment.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
• TwelveTwentyOne Planning – the move to a more strategic planning basis needs to be reflected in the consultation. • Turley obo BDW Trading Ltd (Redrow Midlands Division) – would like to see the NPPF reflected in the Local Plan; the Local Plan will need to consider the geographical location and housing requirements of the SDS (Spatial Development Strategy); housing delivery to date should inform policies and mechanisms to ensure a deliverable five-year housing supply; Green Belt and grey belt land should be prioritised for release where it can support housing delivery; monitor progress of the preparation of the Local Plan against the timetable; request that upcoming Local Government Reorganisation is seamless and does not impact the delivery of the Local Plan; and continued engagement with landowners and promoters to accommodate sustainable growth opportunities. • Turley obo BDW Trading Ltd (Redrow) – would like to see the revised NPPF reflected in the Local Plan; the Local Plan will need to consider the geographical location and housing requirements of the SDS (Spatial Development Strategy); housing delivery to date should inform policies and mechanisms to ensure a deliverable five-year housing supply; Green Belt and grey belt land should be prioritised for release where it can support housing delivery; monitor progress of the preparation of the Local Plan against the timetable; request that upcoming Local Government Reorganisation is seamless and does not impact the delivery of the Local Plan; and continued

engagement with landowners and promoters to accommodate sustainable growth opportunities.
Twenty5 Planning obo Midland Land Limited and Persimmon Homes South Midlands – highlight the need to meet housing needs in full and maintain a sufficient supply of deliverable housing land and provide a range of site sizes to ensure housing delivery throughout the plan period, particularly early in the plan period.

BDC's response:

- 3.6.5 A wide range of comments were submitted for question 9. A common response on the Smart Survey questionnaire was “no” to question 9 with no additional detail. Some of the responses raise similar points to other comments considered under previous questions. The relevant planning matters within the Council's remit will be considered as the Local Plan develops.

3.7 Responses to non-consultation questions

- 3.7.1 The table below summarises the responses received that do not specifically address one of the questions posed in the scoping document and underneath BDC's response.

Responses to non-consultation questions
<u>Summary of matters raised</u>
Public responses
Some responses from the public cite objections to specific sites across the district. As set out in the scoping document, this consultation does not address site-specific matters. These responses have been assessed, but site-related comments have not been summarised for the purpose of this document.
Concerns that views are ignored and previous objections remain.
Protect the Green Belt and ensure any review is supported by robust evidence. Any site assessment must demonstrate exceptional circumstances and consider reasonable alternatives.
Brownfield sites should be considered before Green Belt release.
Ensure that new development is accompanied by the necessary infrastructure including roads, public transport, schools, healthcare, drainage and utilities. Some request that the delivery of infrastructure is provided ahead of new development and is infrastructure-led.
Concerns about the increased impact of traffic on the road network.
Protect biodiversity, mature trees, hedgerows, habitats and achieve meaningful environmental improvements.
Protect existing green space and woodland.
Assess cumulative impacts of developments on traffic, air quality and local services and facilities.
Protect the distinct character and identity of Bromsgrove's town and villages and preventing inappropriate coalescence between settlements.
Opposition to the loss of leisure and recreational facilities and associated biodiversity loss.
Delivering high-quality, sustainable development that is energy efficient, resilient to climate change and well-integrated with existing communities.

• Ensure local residents are consulted openly at every stage of the Local Plan process, with clear explanations of the evidence used to support decisions. Additionally, ensure genuinely wide public engagement.
• The Plan is convoluted for people to respond efficiently.
• Bromsgrove district is losing too much rural food productive land.
• Ensure the UK Parliament's post on 'Understanding the 1.5°C global warming level: Implications for policy and adaptation' is followed.
• Accessible elderly housing should be prioritised.
• A clear site selection methodology should be published comparing all reasonable alternatives sites, including brownfield sites.
• The Plan should include settlement-specific design codes and density limits for sensitive edges. Infilling should also be considered.
• Concerns about the calculation of the Council's local housing need figure with a request to challenge the Government's standard method.
• Concerns about inappropriate 'speculative' applications in the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan and lack of a 5YHLS.
Consultation bodies and other stakeholders responses
• Community Campaigner – historic environment related guidance for design codes, construction methods and contractors.
• Community Campaigner – enhancement and protection suggestions and working with stakeholders for the betterment of designated and non-designated heritage assets.
• Community Campaigner – enhancement suggestions for conservation areas and suggestions to improve the permission process.
• Community Campaigner – appropriate improvements to historic buildings to combat climate change and provide economic benefits. Additionally, improvements to the outdoor environment e.g. maximising biodiversity, flooding and transport suggestions to mitigate climate change.
• Community Campaigner – suggestions for the application process, and enforcement penalties for the deliberate neglect to historic buildings.
• Natural England: ○ The Nature Recovery Network (which aims to expand and connect wildlife habitats to support species recovery and deliver wider benefits such as carbon capture, air and water quality improvements and recreation etc.) does not stand out as a key driver. The plan should include policies and proposals for nature recovery. ○ The LNRS should play an important role in informing and strengthening Local Plans by: identifying the most appropriate locations for habitat creation, restoration and enhancement, where actions are likely to deliver the greatest benefits for nature and the wider environment; and supporting all stakeholders in targeting investment and activity to areas where they can make the greatest contribution to nature recovery. ○ The Plan should map local ecological networks, including buffers and wildlife corridors and set out policies and proposals to safeguard and enhance the network, including contributions through development where appropriate. ○ Have a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Local planning authorities are legally required to "take account" of LNRS' when developing Local Plans. It is vital to consider how areas mapped within a LNRS and the Potential Measures proposed are reflected in the plan, including the extent of safeguarding which should be applied. ○ The Worcestershire LNRS should help identify both potential areas of importance for biodiversity, the connectivity of ecological corridors and green infrastructure. It should inform development site assessments;

biodiversity net gain arrangements; site allocations and associated green infrastructure. ○ Reference should be made to the LNRS within the site allocations policy wording when available. This is in order to develop clear policies and strategies that give developers an indication as to what the requirements are in relation to nature recovery such as whether there are any areas that are of particular importance to biodiversity (as identified within the LNRS mapping) or whether there are any associated biodiversity actions recommended for a site (these can be found within the LNRS strategy).
• Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) West Midlands – support greater cross-boundary cooperation, a brownfield-first approach, town centre regeneration, protection of strategic Green Belt gaps and important landscapes, and the use of brownfield land for solar generation whilst avoiding the loss of productive agricultural land.
• Active Travel England – should be informed by robust understanding of existing and future active travel and public transport networks, travel patterns and connectivity. Baseline evidence should include: analysis of travel patterns and mode choice; mapping of existing and planned active travel networks, public transport services and key local amenities; assessment of their connectivity by active travel and public transport informed by the DfT Connectivity Tool; identification of existing deficiencies in connectivity, accessibility and mode share; identification of factors affecting suitability and attractiveness of active travel and public transport; and review of Local Transport Plans, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, Rights of Way Improvement Plans, and Bus Service Improvement Plans.
• Active Travel England – Local Plan visions should be informed by baseline findings and adopt a vision-led approach, consistent with national policy, that prioritises sustainable travel. The vision should seek to maximise journeys made by active travel and public transport, reduce reliance on private car travel, and support wider health, equality, climate & environmental objectives. • Expects vision statements to commit to growth that improves health, wellbeing, quality of life and environmental outcomes through increased use of active travel and public transport, including measurable increases in active travel and public transport mode share over the plan period.
• Active Travel England – evidence required to test options, proposed spatial strategy and site allocations: forecasts of active travel and public transport demand; demonstration that the spatial strategy and allocations have been informed by their ability to maximise access by active travel and public transport and support mode shift; how the proposed strategy will improve connectivity and accessibility to key destinations, and address identified constraints and deficiencies; identification of the active travel and public transport infrastructure and services required to support planned growth, together with evidence of their deliverability, including infrastructure requirements, costs, funding sources, phasing and implementation risks; assessment of cumulative impacts of proposed development on active travel and public transport networks, including cross-boundary impacts; and assessment of the contribution of the proposed strategy to public health, equality, inclusion, carbon reduction and wider environmental objectives.
• Active Travel England – where new or improved transport infrastructure is required, priority should be given to active travel and public transport interventions before consideration of highway capacity enhancements, in accordance with the transport hierarchy.
• Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) – has no comments in regard to nuisance and air quality at this stage.

Forestry Commission – recommends that the Local Plan aligns with the NPPF to ensure the protection and enhancement of woodland areas. Additionally, trees play a crucial role in achieving BNG by providing habitats for wildlife, improving air quality, and contributing to climate resilience and therefore encourage the integration of tree planting and woodland creation into development plans to meet BNG requirements and enhance local biodiversity.
West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) – highlight Bromsgrove’s strong functional relationship with Birmingham and the wider WMCA area and request that the Local Plan has regard to cross-boundary housing and employment needs, emerging strategic planning work, sustainable transport networks and continued collaboration with neighbouring authorities & infrastructure providers.
Homes England – support the preparation and updating of evidence relating to housing need, infrastructure requirements, transport capacity and Green Belt/Grey Belt assessments. Emphasise the importance of robust up-to-date evidence, objective assessment of reasonable alternatives, prioritisation of brownfield land and sustainable development opportunities, and continued engagement with site promoters during the preparation of the Local Plan.
The Coal Authority – do not consider it would be reasonable to request inclusion of a policy, or a criteria, relating to land instability arising as a consequence of past coal mining activity as the Bromsgrove area has limited coal mining legacy at surface and shallow depth. Should development proposals take place in the area within the defined Development High Risk Area then consideration will need to be given to the risks this may pose. Any planning application should be supported by a Coal Mining Risk Assessment.
Hagley Parish Council – consider that previous consultation responses and supporting technical evidence demonstrate significant concerns regarding infrastructure capacity, including highways, schools, healthcare, parking, drainage and public transport. They also highlight concerns relating to Green Belt protection, settlement identity, flooding, biodiversity and the cumulative impact of development, and consider future growth should be aligned with infrastructure delivery and overall deliverability.
Fisher German obo National Grid Electricity Transmission – the Council should ensure that development proposals located near transmission assets demonstrate that they will not compromise safety, operability, maintenance access, asset replacement or future network expansion.
South Staffordshire District Council – welcome greater recognition within the plan of cross boundary considerations, and a willingness to take into account the findings of any study relating to any unmet development needs in the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area when considering future housing requirements.
Worcester City Council – notes that severe traffic congestion has already been noted as a constraint. The new plan should also consider any implications for wider cross-boundary functions in relation to designated landscapes and ecological networks.
Worcester City Council – welcome working with BDC to consider any potential impact in relation to cross-boundary issues, such as housing and employment land requirements.
On behalf of developers and landowners responses
There were a substantial number of responses which provide commentary to support the promotion of their site and/or frame answers to the scoping questions around their site. As set out in the scoping document, this consultation does not address site-specific matters. These representations have been assessed, but site-related comments have not been summarised for the purpose of this summary document.

Planning Issues obo Churchill Living and McCarthy & Stone – advocate that the Local Plan does not need to have a specific older persons housing policy that details the locational requirements but instead the Local Plan should identify the older persons housing need and seek to allocate some sites to deliver such identified need.
- Planning Issues obo Churchill Living and McCarthy & Stone – must ensure that when setting M4(3) standards that the accompanying viability assessment correctly assess and includes additional cost for delivering this type of housing. M4(3) housing requires significant modifications to a typical unit beyond a M4(2) unit and must be bigger than M4(2) units to provide adaption such as wheelchair circulation space. Given the level of likely need for older persons housing, the council should be careful not to prejudice delivery through the imposition of overly prescriptive and unnecessary criteria. - McCarthy & Stone recently undertook a wheelchair user survey of all of its developments to understand the proportion of residents that use a wheelchair. This identified that only 2.7% of residents of occupied flats use a wheelchair in their apartments whilst 3.2% of residents use a wheelchair in communal areas.
Planning Issues obo Churchill Living and McCarthy & Stone – the viability of specialist housing for older people is more finely balanced than ‘general needs’ housing and that these housing typologies should be robustly assessed for viability and affordable housing separately to mainstream housing. Advice is provided on what should be noted within the viability assessment.
Planning Issues obo Churchill Living and McCarthy & Stone – our experience is that older person’s housing proposals will not viably provide affordable housing on a typical development site given that unit numbers will not generate sufficient affordable housing for a registered provider to have interest in acquiring units; typical sites are too constrained to accommodate mixed management arrangements; and viability has consistently demonstrated that it is not financially feasible to provide ‘policy compliant’ affordable housing. The affordable housing & housing mix policies should be applied flexibly in respect of older persons housing or a reduced/exempt affordable provision.
M A Fell obo the freehold owners of a site in Blackwell – identify a mix of site sizes capable of delivering homes early in the plan period and supporting the 5YHLS, support a site selection process that gives appropriate weight to small and medium-sized sites, housing choice for older people, and realistic evidence requirements. Also consider evidence used in site assessments should be robust and proportionate, and that plan preparation should avoid unnecessary delay and duplication of technical work.
Pegasus Group obo Catesby Estates – the Local Plan will have to be prepared within the remit of the policies within the August 2026 NPPF.
Pegasus Group obo Catesby Estates – noted the NPPF’s requirement for the Local Plan period to be at least 10 years post adoption and that strategic allocations often take more than 15 years to be delivered. Meaning a longer plan period may be necessary to be found sound at examination.

BDC’s response:

- 3.7.2 A wide array of comments are summarised above that were not specifically answering one of the questions in the scoping consultation document. However, it is noted that some of the responses relate to similar points summarised under the question tables in this document. The appropriate matters will be considered as the Local Plan progresses.

Section 4: Next steps

4.1 Next steps

- 4.1.1 The responses received to this scoping consultation, together with responses from previous consultations, including the Draft Development Strategy consultation last year, will inform the preparation of the Local Plan and the Council's engagement strategy for future consultations.
- 4.1.2 There will be two further opportunities to help shape the Local Plan. The next consultation is the proposed Local Plan content and evidence consultation which is anticipated to be held in June 2027 for a minimum of 6 weeks. The final consultation is expected to be held in March 2028 for a minimum of 8 weeks which is a consultation on the full draft Local Plan before it is submitted for independent examination. The anticipated key milestone dates can be found in the Local Plan timetable, available at <https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/BromsgrovePlan-timetable>.
- 4.1.3 The Council's website includes all information on the Local Plan; including the latest news; Local Plan timetable, notice of intention to commence local plan preparation, scoping consultation details, Gateway 1 self-assessment, evidence base, details of previous consultations held under the legacy plan-making system, and the privacy notice – <https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/policy/strategic-planning/emerging-bromsgrove-district-local-plan/>. This will be kept up to date throughout the preparation of the Local Plan, and any updates will be published there.

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Council
2026**14th October****Designation of the Monitoring Officer Function**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Karen May
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	N/A
Report Author	Job Title: Chief Executive Contact: John Leach email:john.leach@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 534000
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Council Priority	All
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is asked to RESOLVE that: -

- 1) the post of Executive Director of Governance and Assurance is designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer pursuant to Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, with effect from the date the revised structure is implemented.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services role is currently designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer.
- 2.2 The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for the redesignation of the statutory Monitoring Officer function following endorsement of senior leadership restructuring proposals by the Joint Appointments Committee on 3 August 2026, which will result in the transfer of the designation to the new role of Executive Director of Governance and Assurance.

Council
2026

14th October

3. OPERATIONAL DETAILS

- 3.1 The proposal does not alter who the current post holder is or the delivery arrangements for Legal, Democratic or Procurement Services, which will continue to be delivered under the leadership of the Monitoring Officer. The proposal relates to the strategic positioning and title of the role within the Senior Leadership Team structure.
- 3.2 The redesignation supports the Council's objective of strengthening governance, assurance and organisational resilience during a period of significant organisational change, including Local Government Reorganisation.
- 3.3 The proposal also aligns the Monitoring Officer function more closely with the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer, strengthening the statutory officer arrangements commonly referred to as the "Golden Triangle".

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Any financial implications associated with this report form part of the wider senior leadership restructuring proposals considered through the relevant staffing governance arrangements. The decision taken by Council in respect of the movement of the monitoring officer function does not in itself have any financial implications

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires each local authority to designate one of its officers as Monitoring Officer.
- 5.2 The current Monitoring Officer designation is attached to the Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services post. As the post is being redesignated as Executive Director of Governance and Assurance, Council approval is required to designate the new post as Monitoring Officer.
- 5.3 Approval of this recommendation will ensure continuity of the statutory Monitoring Officer function and compliance with legislative requirements

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- 5.4 The post holder was appointed as the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) and Returning Officer (RO) in 2023 and this will remain unaffected.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 The proposal supports governance stability and organisational resilience during Local Government Reorganisation by ensuring the Monitoring Officer function continues to be positioned appropriately within the Council's executive leadership arrangements.

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 The proposal supports the Council's objective of maintaining an effective and well-governed organisation through strengthened governance and assurance arrangements.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.3 There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

Community Impact

- 6.4 The proposal does not directly affect service delivery but supports effective governance, compliance and organisational resilience.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.5 The proposal relates to the designation of a statutory function to a post and has been developed based on organisational requirements and governance considerations.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Failure to approve the redesignation would result in the Monitoring Officer designation remaining attached to a post title that no longer exists following implementation of the revised structure. Approval therefore ensures continuity and clarity in respect of the Council's statutory governance arrangements. This reflects the governance risks identified within the Joint Appointments Committee report.

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8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

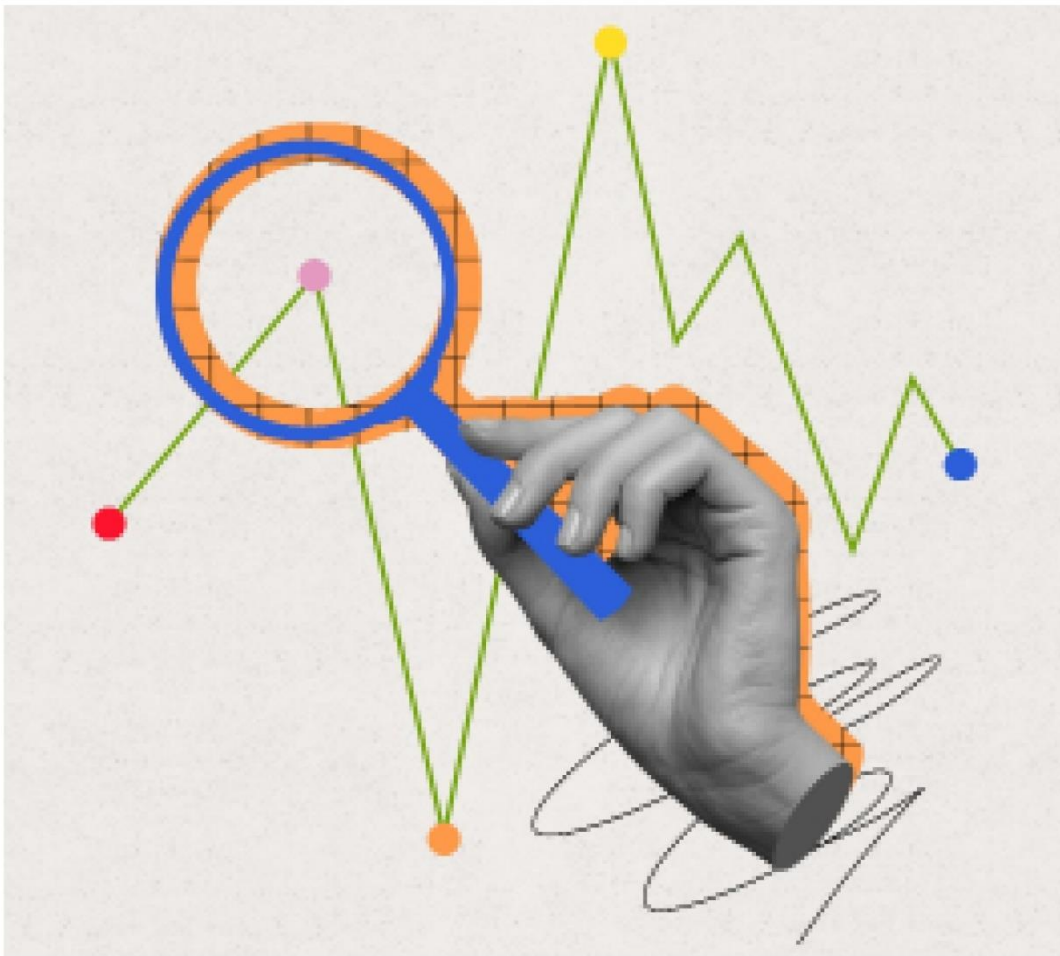
Background Papers

Report to the Joint Appointments Committee meeting held on 3rd
August 2026: [Report to the Joint Appointments Committee - Executive
Director of Governance and Assurance](#)

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Karen May	29/09/2026
Lead Director / Assistant Director	John Leach, Chief Executive	29/09/2026
Financial Services	James Walton	09/09/20206
Legal Services	Nicola Cummings – Principal Solicitor - Governance	14/09/26

Bromsgrove District Council



Audit, Standards and Governance Committee

ANNUAL REPORT

2025 - 2026



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

On behalf of the Committee, I thank Councillor Harrison Warren-Clarke for his Chairmanship prior to my appointment on 14th July 2025. I took the opportunity to undertake training supplied by the Local Government Association (LGA) to understand the complexity of the role of Chairman for this very important Committee. I note that this is an apolitical meeting with duties outlined within this report. It does not appear very exciting as it relates to Audit, Standards & Governance (A, S and G) but is essential in providing Councillors, who are residents' representatives the assurance needed in audit matters and in how the Council govern the delivery of services and maintain standards.

I thank **all** the Democratic Services Officers for their support, including the interim 151 Officer Julie Lorraine, Mrs Debra Goodall and their team for continuing to progress improvements and resolution with the ongoing issues of how Value Added Tax (VAT) is managed with His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). This matter is a complex one, given our shared service arrangement for financial matters. The draft accounts were produced in time for the period of public inspection, although further work is currently underway to improve our lines of communication with the External Auditors, which resulted in our inability to meet the backstop date of 26th February 2026 for publication of the final accounts. I thank Councillor Stephen Colella on becoming our Risk Champion and in moving forward this agenda, taking over from where Councillor Rachael Bailes left off, I thank her for her work. We have elevated the assessment of Corporate Risk to an item on the agenda befitting the significance of ensuring Corporate Risks are carefully assessed and to be assured of adequate mitigation of Corporate Risks for Council and residents. This is now supported with a live 'Risk Dashboard' for Officers and some A, S and G Members. Officers continue to develop this newly created information communication technology (ICT) support system. I thank all the Members of the Committee for their diligence and attention, given the breadth of work that the Committee undertakes.

The report this year has moved on from the period where we saw significant issues highlighted by our Auditors Annual Reports for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23. The most important of these being that we closed those accounts. The 2023/24 and 24/25 accounts are currently being Audited by Ernst and Young (EY) our new external auditors. We have had expectations these would be signed off in line with Governments "backstop requirements" on 26th February 2026. As with many Councils, there is still the requirement for clarity over previous and potential further "Disclaimed Opinions" and their knock-on effect on future years audit opinions. We continue to engage positively with EY to agree a new timeline for their work to complete on the outstanding accounts and will remain on the government's published list of councils yet to issue final audited positions until such time as that is resolved.

The Committee agreed that the requirement highlighted by the Audit Task Group in 2023 on rectification of the financial position, having these deliverables met, moved back to meeting quarterly. We now reserve the right to call additional formal meetings, if required going forward in uncertain times, as we approach Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). We continue to look to appoint an independent lay member of the Committee, which was highlighted in Councillor David Nicholl's and Councillor Harrison Warren-Clarke's previous reports to Council. We appreciate the engagement of the representative of Parish Council's, Marc Worrall, whose participation will be essential going forward. There is much to do before the change to a unitary authority takes place.

Councillor E.M.S. Gray

Chairman of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee

MEMBERSHIP

Esther Gray (Chairman)



Bakul Kumar (Vice-Chairman)



Sam Ammar



Steve Colella



Anita Dale



Derek Forsythe



David Hopkins



Bernard McEldowney



David Nicholl



Justin Stanley

Marc Worrall (Parish
Councils' Representative)

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee's activities during the municipal year 2025-26.

The ultimate responsibility for Audit rests with the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Finance and the Section 151 Officer. The Portfolio Holder is expected to attend each meeting as determined in the Council's Constitution.

During the year the Committee had considered reports and updates on the following subjects:

- Monitoring Officer's Report – details complaints and training taken place during the period between meetings.
- Updates from the Internal Audit Team.
- Updates from the External Auditors (including Backstop Report).
- General Dispositions Report.
- Annual Update Report on Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Report.
- Financial Compliance Report (including updates on Statements of Accounts).
- Financial Savings Monitoring Report.
- Risk Management Report/Quarterly Risk Update.
- Risk Champion Update.
- Annual Review from the Local Government Ombudsman.
- Whistleblowing Policy update
- Capital Strategy including Treasury Management Strategy

Further information about some of the key responsibilities of the Committee are detailed within this report.

Meeting dates and minutes of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee meetings can be found on the Bromsgrove District Council website, link detailed below:

[Browse meetings - Audit, Standards and Governance Committee](#)

The Role of The Audit, Standards And Governance Committee

Scope and Responsibility

The Audit, Standards and Governance Committee provide independent assurance to the Council in respect of:

- The effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements
- The Annual Governance Statement
- The Review of the Annual Statement of Accounts
- Risk Management Framework and strategies
- The effectiveness of the Council's financial and non-financial performance
- Anti-Fraud arrangements
- Whistle-blowing strategies
- Internal and external audit activity
- Democratic governance

The Committee is also responsible for the Council's Standards Regime which covers both District and Parish Councils. Areas encompassed within the Standards Regime include:

- Promoting high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted members of Council bodies.
- Assisting Councillors and co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.
- Advising and training Members and co-opted members in respect of the Code of Conduct.
- Formulating advice to members and officers in declarations of gifts and hospitality.
- Granting dispensations to Councillors and co-opted members from requirements relating to interests as set out in the Code of Conduct.
- Considering reports from the Monitoring Officer following investigation into complaints about elected Members.

Meetings of the Committee – 2025-2026

The Council's constitution requires the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee to hold quarterly meetings. At its meeting on 9th March 2023, the Committee agreed that it should hold six meetings per municipal year (meet bi-monthly) until issues with the submission of the outstanding Statements of Accounts had been resolved. During the meeting held on 16th January 2025, Members agreed to the recommendation that following receipt of "Disclaimer Opinions" from the External Auditors for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 Accounts, as approved at the Committee meeting on the 5th December, the subsequent "Disclaimer Opinion" of the 2022/23 Accounts on the 3rd January and the provision of the 2023/24 Accounts for Public Consultation by the 17th January 2025 as per the backstop regulations, that Audit, Standards and Governance Committee meetings revert to being quarterly in nature. In addition to these meetings members of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee are invited to meet with the internal Auditor who provides guidance on how that work is carried out and how concerns come to them to add to their investigations. This opportunity took place on 15 December 2025 via Teams. It is considered good practice for this to continue in this vein.

Standards Regime

There are two main areas which are considered regularly in terms of the Committee's responsibility for Standards.

Monitoring Officer's Report

This covers Member Training, Member Complaints and Parish Council matters.

If the elected Member was found to have breached the Authority's Code of Conduct, the powers available to the Authority include a formal letter of warning to the Member and formal censure by motion, of a committee, for the removal of the Member from a Committee (which does not legally prevent the Councillor in question from attending), in addition to adverse publicity.

The Council's Code of Conduct is designed primarily with the view of maintaining standards through a conciliatory approach and there was a high reliance on the Monitoring Officer working in cooperation with political Group Leaders when finding resolutions to Member complaints.

It was reported through the Monitoring Officer's report that Members received training throughout the 2025-2026 municipal year. A small number of Member training sessions had been arranged for 2025/26. This reduced number of training sessions had been booked in accordance with arrangements requested by the Member Development Steering Group (MDSG). In line with the approach agreed, some of this training was delivered jointly with Redditch Borough Council, whilst other sessions were bespoke and being delivered to Bromsgrove Members only.

The MDSG had previously requested that the majority of training should be delivered in person, however, Members can opt to attend most training sessions remotely, with the link to the session provided on request. For 2026/27 the MDSG had agreed that the majority of training should be delivered remotely on the basis that this will be more convenient for Members who have work, caring or other commitments. The exceptions to this will be planning and licensing training, where members will be expected to attend the training that is provided in person.

The MDSG had also requested that Safeguarding training be arranged to be delivered prior to the end of the municipal year. Officers are currently in the process of identifying a date on which this training could be delivered.

The training included the following sessions:

- Code of Conduct Training – Thursday 8th May 2025
- BDC Member Planning Training – Monday 2nd June 2025
- Joint RBC/BDC Member Local Government Finance Training – Wednesday 25th June 2025
- Member Licensing Refresher Training – Monday 21st July 2025

The Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) had met several times throughout the municipal year. MDSG discussed the needs and adaptations required to make training relevant to Members. In addition, discussions took place regarding the Member Induction and training for the next municipal year.

The Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) is a cross-party group where any potential changes to the Council's constitution are discussed. CRWG continued to meet during 2025-2026 and had been considering issues relating to constitutional changes that follow the Council's approval on 20th September 2023 of the hybrid Leader and Cabinet governance model, implemented from the start of 2024-25 municipal year.

Among the items of business that the group discussed during the municipal year were:

- Planning Committee Matters referred from the Council in respect of Motions on Notice.
- Council Procedures Rules in respect of Public Participation.
- Motions on Notice in respect of the Requirements in the Council Procedure Rules.
- Retention Schedule Rules in respect of the live streaming of meetings.

Member Complaints

An update on Member complaints had been provided in all Monitoring Officer's reports. It was noted that several Member complaints had been received to date in 2025-26, most of which have been resolved locally. There had also been several complaints received in respect of Parish Councillors. These continue to be investigated locally by the Monitoring Officer. There had been no investigations about Members which required a Hearings Sub-Committee to be convened.

Dispensation Report

The Audit, Standards and Governance Committee received several dispensations reports this year. The reports on Individual Member Dispensations were considered on 14th July 2025 respectively. The requests for Individual Member Dispensations detailed in those reports were granted by the Committee. The dispensations agreed at these meetings remain valid until the first meeting of the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee following the next District Council Elections in May 2027 unless amended by the Committee prior to that date.

Parish Council Involvement

The Parish Council's representative can add any item on to the agenda as required as outlined in the Committee Terms of Reference. Whilst Parish Councils can appoint two representatives on to the Committee, only one of these places was taken up. The Parish Council's Representative for the municipal year 2025-26 was Mr M. Worrall.

Investigations and Enquiries

The Independent Person, Mr Mel Nock, had continued to support the Monitoring Officer in the management of Member-to-Member complaints where necessary. The Council had considered joining the other District Councils in Worcestershire that had a retained pool of

Independent Persons. Any proposals for this would be considered by the Committee. In the meantime, Mr Nock, remains the Independent Person on an interim basis.

INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

During the year the Committee had continued to receive updates on the work of the Internal Audit team including details of the following completed audit reports:

- Internal Audit Plan 2025-26
- Internal Audit Annual Report 2024-25
- Internal Audit - Progress Report (every meeting).

EXTERNAL AUDITORS

On the 3rd of October 2024, the Council appointed Auditors for 2023/24 onwards Bishop Fleming notified the Council that they were resigning. The Council, following liaison with Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA) for the appointment of alternative Auditors, confirmed that Ernst and Young (EY) would officially become the Council's External Auditors on the 24th of October 2024 and held their first onboarding meeting following the start of the municipal year on 14th July 2025.

During the year the Committee received reports and updates from Ernst and Young on the following subjects:

- Audit Update Report 2023/24

The Progress Reports were considered at each meeting of the Committee and covered a range of issues including the following:

- Signing of accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23
- Disclaimer of opinion for 2023/24 and 2024/25
- Draft auditor report for 2024/25
- Value for Money (VFM)
- Significant Risks
- Financial Statements

Section 24 Notice

One of the legislative reporting requirements the Council had not achieved was the delivery of the 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statement of Accounts which resulted in the issuing of a Section 24 Statement for the Council. Following this, a review was undertaken by a Task Group of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee. As part of its investigations, a decision was undertaken to increase the frequency of Audit Committee meetings to six times a year, until the Council rectified the situation.

Backstop Report

On 30th July 2024, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution provided a written statement to Parliament confirming the Government's intention to introduce a backstop date for English local authority audits up to 2022/23 of 13th December 2024. A

backstop date for 2023/24 was proposed of 28th February 2025 and a date for 2024/25 audits of 27th February 2026.

External Auditors, Grant Thornton considered that there would be insufficient time to conclude their work in advance of the 13th December 2024 backstop deadline. On that basis the backstop for the 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 years was applied. Given that several key audit areas remained outstanding, their proposed audit reports would be issued as a disclaimer of opinion, effectively meaning Grant Thornton had been unable to gain the assurance necessary to give an audit opinion by the statutory backstop date of 27th February 2026.

During its meeting on 16th January 2025, Members agreed that following receipt of the Disclaimer Opinions for the 2020/21 and 21/22 Accounts, the subsequent Disclaimer Opinion of the 22/23 Accounts and the provision of the 2023/24 Accounts for Public Consultation that meetings revert to being quarterly in nature.

Risk Champion Updates

Following discussions held by the previous risk champion and considerations of the role and responsibilities, during a meeting held on 24th November 2025 it was announced and agreed by the Board that Councillor S.R. Colella be appointed as the new risk champion. It was also agreed that further informal discussions about the role would be discussed with the Interim Section 151 Officer and that it would be appropriate that the risk champion should be invited to attend future Corporate Risk Management Officer Group (CRMOG) meetings.

Following the request by the Chairman it was agreed that the Risk Champion update would follow the Risk Report for continuity, on each agenda. During a meeting held on 17th February 2026 the Risk Champion praised the significant improvements in risk management maturity and the introduction of the Power BI system, which would enhance transparency and oversight and would assist with the ability to fulfil the role of Risk Champion.

Below is a summary of the main matters discussed at Audit, Standards and Governance Committee in this municipal year:

14th July 2025

Annual Update Report on Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)

During this meeting Members were asked to consider the annual update report on the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA). It was explained that the Council had not used RIPA powers in recent years and that the policy was praised by inspectors and only minor updates were required.

Localism Act 2011 – Standards Regime – Dispensations

During consideration of this report the Committee considered the approval of individual Member dispensations with the following points discussed:

- Dispensations fell into four categories which included: general, council tax arrears, Member and outside body appointment dispensations. However, the report related only to individual Member and outside body appointment dispensations.

- The Committee approved a range of dispensations for Members to participate in discussions where they might otherwise have a conflict of interest.
- Members were reminded to update their dispensations as roles changed.
- It was agreed that a reminder would be issued at the next Council meeting for Members to review their dispensations.

External Audit On Boarding Discussion Update

Members welcomed the newly appointed external auditors Ernst and Young (EY) to the meeting with the following key points discussed regarding the onboarding process:

- The 2023/24 audits would result in a disclaimer of opinion due to historical issues. As part of this, exception reporting around value for money was also taking place which was expected be reported back to the Board by early Autumn prior to the sign off, of the accounts. The previous auditors Grant Thornton had issued statutory recommendations which required review also, providing additional work.
- 2024/25 audit would begin in November 2025, with a statutory deadline of 27 February 2026.

Annual Report of Internal Audit for 2024/25

This report provided the Annual Internal Audit Opinion for the financial year 2024/25, as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2018 and the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. It supported the Council's Annual Governance Statement by offering independent assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and internal control processes.

The report provided a reasonable level of independent assurance that the Council's internal controls and risk management processes were effective and supported the achievement of its strategic objectives.

The following key points were discussed:

- Three audits received limited assurance: GPC credit card usage, accounts payable and procurement with follow-up audits planned to address the issues.
- Service performance had improved significantly with planned audits delivered 93% of the planned days, compared to 58% the year before.
- Team productivity had improved from 66% to 81%.
- Internal audits were on track to achieve the 85% productivity target for 2025/26.
- Continuous improvement activities were being carried out, including an auditor skill set review, individual training and development needs to include environmental sustainability training.
- Risk of fraud was evaluated on every individual audit delivered.
- External quality assessments were carried out during the financial year, with a general conformance with the standards.
- How the Council demonstrate organisational independence was also included within the report.
- Internal audits were mostly in compliance for the new global internal audit standards for the forthcoming year which had replaced the previous public sector internal audit standards. However, a three-year audit strategy was in development.

Internal Audit Plan 2025/26

During this item the Committee considered the draft Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26 with the key points discussed:

- The plan was risk based, designed to support the Council in achieving its objectives.
- The approach to audit planning had changed with each area selected by internal audit had been discussed and agreed with SLT, following a review, which included key areas such as procurement and contract management.
- The internal audit plan was based upon a resource allocation of 250 chargeable days, which had been agreed by the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer.
- There was a 15-day contingency for ad hoc advice.
- Any significant amendments during the year would be reported to the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee.

Financial Compliance Report including Update on Statement of Accounts

This report set out details of delivery against key financial requirements with the following key points discussed:

- Reporting on the national indicators had been moved into appendices.
- The Council were complying with national and local requirements. The local requirements generally were delivered through the budget, which was approved on 19th February 2025, in particular with regard to the Treasury indicators.
- The Government had published a list of councils who had not complied with publishing their 2023/24 accounts in accordance with the backstop date of 28th February 2025 which included BDC. Members were advised that this was due to the Council not having external auditors at that time.
- The Council met the deadline for publishing the 2024/25 accounts.
- A financial stability plan was being developed to include the Tech One financial system, Financial Rules, Training Plan and Procurement Processes which would be reported at a future meeting.
- VAT returns were being submitted monthly; a large refund was still under negotiation at Redditch Borough Council. Some historical VAT issues remained under review, particularly around shared services with Redditch Borough Council.

Financial Savings Monitoring Report

The Committee received a report which set out the final position on the financial savings programme with the following key points considered:

- The Council ended the year with a £129k underspend, largely due to additional fleet and finance cost savings with the accounts completed and offset by investment interest, lower interest payments and additional grant income. This compared to an underspend figure of £53k reported at Quarter 3 which resulted in a £76k improvement of the Council's position.
- The largest savings was due to pension costs linked to the 23-triennial revaluation, which ran for three years.
- The position at year end 2023/24 in terms of departmental savings included two Amber risk items which required careful monitoring. The Red risk item in relation to Finance would not be delivered, with additional resources established to ensure the accounts were up to date.
- Some savings targets (e.g. planning income, parking, waste) remained at risk which could be largely impacted by LGR.

- Future savings monitoring reporting were to be reviewed and reported through the monitoring report, with considerations for this to be scrutinised under the Finance and Budget Working Group. It was agreed by the Committee that this proposition would-be discussed further with the Chairman of the Finance and Budget Working Group.
- Clarity on the overspend for Shared Services was requested by Members. It was explained that future reporting would be amended to show the overspend for individual services.

Risk Management Report/Quarterly Risk Update

During the meeting the Committee considered an update report about corporate and departmental risks with the following key points discussed:

- A new, simplified risk report format was introduced.
- Members were encouraged to provide areas for improvement within the risk reporting. However, after consultation with the portfolio holder, corporate risks would include further narrative.
- 14 corporate risks were identified which included Planning decisions and potential special measures, Cybersecurity and Shared service delivery.

29th September 2025

Annual Review from the Local Government Ombudsman

During this meeting Members considered a report on the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter, which set out the statistics for complaints made against the Council covering the year ending 31st March 2025.

Members were informed that the Local Government Ombudsman had changed its reporting approach. Annual letters would only be issued in cases of exceptional practice or concerns about complaint handling. Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) had not received such a letter for the period ending 31st March 2025.

During that period, 3 new complaints were received and 6 were decided. Of the 6 decided cases, only 1 complaint was upheld, relating to housing and home adaptations under a Disabled Facilities Grant. Both BDC and Worcestershire County Council (WCC) were found to be at fault, resulting in a service failure. The Ombudsman's recommendations were detailed in the report and had been considered by Cabinet on 22nd January 2025. All recommendations had been complied with. Of the remaining decided complaints, 3 were referred back to the Council as premature and 2 were closed after initial enquiries due to insufficient evidence of fault or injustice. A link to the Ombudsman's website was provided for Members to view statistics for other local authorities.

Audit Update Report 2023/24

This report provided a background and status update on the 2023/24 audit for the Council and context regarding the Government's legislation aimed at clearing the backlog of local audits and establishing a sustainable audit system.

It was noted that the Council had missed Phase One of the recovery deadline, as the 2021/22 and 2022/23 accounts were signed in January 2025, beyond the 13th December 2024 backstop date. This delay impacted the 2023/24 accounts, which were not published until mid-

January 2025, with the inspection period ending on 27th February 2025. Consequently, Phase Two of the recovery had not been met.

The audit commenced in June 2025, following onboarding delays. Challenges were encountered which included management resources being prioritised toward meeting the 30th June 2025 deadline for publishing 2024/25 draft statements, conflicting annual leave schedules and delays in the provision of requested information.

It was acknowledged that the Council had not been subject to audit for several years, which had impacted capacity and created challenges for the management team, however, efforts to address the issues was ongoing.

Despite the disclaimer of opinion on the 2023/24 financial statements, EY confirmed that auditing standards required certain procedures to be performed, which were underway. The local regulations also required Value For Money (VFM) work to be completed, which was also in progress.

Internal Audit Progress Report

The Committee received the routine internal audit progress report. It was noted that good progress had been made since the audit plan was approved in July 2025. The service was fully staffed and 82 audit days had been delivered against a full year plan of 250. Although this was below the pro-rata target, it had been planned to load more work into the second half of the year.

It was further reported that 2 audits were at draft report stage and 7 were in progress. Members' attention was drawn to the report provided which detailed 22 outstanding recommendations, including 1 high and 3 medium priority actions overdue as of June 2025. It was confirmed that actions related to aged debt reporting had since been implemented, reducing the total to 20 outstanding. The remaining overdue actions related to member training on cybersecurity and confirmation that third-party contracts included robust data security provisions. It was noted that the Council's new procurement regulations were expected to address the latter, pending confirmation.

Members also noted that no significant changes to the internal audit plan were proposed. Members were informed of upcoming team training events which included assignment management training and integrity and objectivity training.

Financial Compliance Report

This reporting provided an update on progress made in response to the Section 24 Statement and the Council's financial recovery and stabilisation efforts. It was reported that the Council had made good progress overall, with key deliverables such as the Quarter 1 Finance Performance and Treasury Management reports completed. However, 2 national returns remained outstanding which included VAT returns and Whole of Government Accounts (WGA).

Significant work had been undertaken with HMRC and tax advisors (PS Tax) with monthly VAT returns being submitted. An internal VAT team has been resourced complimented by an external specialist advisor, PS Tax to support the preparation and submission of error

correction notices as agreed with HMRC. Mandatory VAT training was being rolled out across the finance team, with introductory training planned for the wider organisation.

The WGA had not been produced for several years, in line with many other authorities. A substantial mapping exercise was planned to bring the Council back on track.

The 2023/24 and 2024/25 accounts were expected to be disclaimed due to audit timelines. Public consultation on the 2024/25 accounts had closed on 11th August 2025 and discussions with EY were ongoing. The Council had transitioned to clearing routine accounts on a monthly basis, marking a significant step forward from previous backlog clearance efforts.

A financial stabilisation plan update was also provided. The recovery phase had placed significant strain on the finance team and stabilisation was the priority. Several interim appointments had been made to strengthen the team including Chief Accountant (interim), Finance Services Manager (interim), 2 Senior Finance Business Partners (permanent), 2 Finance Business Partners (interim), VAT Specialist (interim), Tech One Systems Manager (interim) and Tech One Technical Support Officer (interim).

A Project Manager was still to be recruited who would oversee major workstreams and it was noted that the Council would utilise its finance stabilisation reserve to fund these temporary arrangements. A report outlining the structure and associated budget pressures was being prepared also for Member's consideration.

Annual Governance Statement

The Committee received the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the financial year ending 31st March 2025. It was explained that the AGS was a statutory requirement under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and provided a corporate overview of governance arrangements. Although it formed part of the Statement of Accounts, it was not a financial report.

The AGS was based on principles of good governance set out by The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) and covered systems, processes, culture, values, strategic objectives, stewardship of public funds and VFM. It also included internal controls, risk management, performance monitoring, compliance with the constitution, decision-making processes, scrutiny functions and contributions from internal and external audit.

It was noted that the AGS identified significant governance issues, including delayed accounts and the Section 24 statements. The delay in signing off the 2023/24 accounts was attributed to the withdrawal of the Council's previous external auditors Grant Thornton and the onboarding of EY. The Council had made representations to Central Government explaining the delay, which were accepted.

The Committee was informed that although disclaimer opinions were expected for 2023/24 and 2024/25, each audit cycle was providing increasing levels of assurance. The Council was working towards achieving a full audit opinion in future years.

24th November 2025

Standards Regime – Monitoring Officers’ Report

During this meeting the committee considered the Monitoring Officer’s reformatted report which provided updates on Member Complaints, Constitution Review and Member training as follows:

- Three public complaints against Members were received and resolved and were all assessed as not conduct matters.
- Five Member to Member complaints were received and resolved informally.
- The meeting of the Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG) which took place on 16th September 2025 discussed matters such as the retention schedule rules in respect of the live streaming of meetings.
- The Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) held a meeting on 27th October 2025. During this meeting the group received an ICT update and feedback from Members for the planning refresher training which took place on 2nd June 2025.

External Audit Update

The External Auditors Ernst and Young provided an update of the 2023/24 and 2024/25 accounts for Member’s consideration.

The following key points were discussed as follows:

- 2023/24 audits restarted in November 2025 and an audit opinion was expected in the new year.
- The draft auditor’s report for 2024/25 had been shared with the Interim Section 151 Officer and would also be provided to the Chairman of Audit, Standards and Governance Committee.
- The 2024/25 audit backstop date of 27th February 2025 would be achieved but due to time constraints, would have a disclaimer opinion.
- The Value for Money (VFM) 2023/24 accounts were nearing completion and once completed EY would then begin to review the 2024/25 accounts.

Risk Management Report/Quarterly Risk Update

This reporting provided The Corporate Risk Update Quarter 2 2025/26 set out activities the Council undertook to monitor and mitigate risk at a corporate level. The Council held a risk register of the most significant risks in relation to the achievement of corporate priorities. This risk register was reviewed quarterly in accordance with the Risk Management Strategy.

As part of the audit reports in 2021 and 2023 the Council introduced processes to actively embed risk mitigation into normal business and introduced departmental ownership of service risks. The latest audit of the Risk Management Embedding 2024/25 dated 1st June 2025 produced an audit opinion of ‘Reasonable Assurance’.

Corporate Risks were identified in the table set out in the report. There had been two movements since the Q1 report as follows:

- Delivery of the Levelling Up Board (COR0010) which moved from an inherent risk of 12 to 9 and residual risk of 12 to 6. Levelling Up Fund (LUF) projects would be completed in May 2026 ahead of the funding deadline.

- Bromsgrove DC Being placed into special measures due to quality of planning application decisions COR0009 had moved from an inherent risk of 9 to 6. Managers supported maintaining a good turnover of major applications, to provide a stable numerical base and also continued to closely monitor appeal decisions. Planning committee members were provided with performance information via a report at Committee which would be completed on a quarterly basis.

Service Risks were set out in the report with no movements since Q1.

Training on how to use the 4Risk system was being arranged for all Members early the following year which would enable Members to review the system.

The Chief Executive also agreed with the Committee and suggested incorporating an additional corporate risk in relation to the arrangements for the Interim Section 151 Officer. It was also suggested that there should be an internal audit review of the actions to mitigate the risks associated with the interim role to provide additional assurance regarding looking forward in respect of financial governance and reporting matters.

Cyber Security Update (Including Whatsapp and AI Policy)

This report introduced two policies for recommendation to Cabinet as follows:

- The Artificial Intelligence (AI) Acceptable Use Policy set principles for ethical, transparent AI use, GDPR compliance and training requirements.
- The WhatsApp Policy restricted use to non-sensitive information. It also set out risk mitigation and compliance steps.

Internal Audit – Progress Report

During this item the Committee received the routine internal audit progress report with the following key points raised:

- 119 productive days had been delivered against a 250-day plan.
- 1 audit had been completed, 3 were in draft stage and 10 were in progress.
- No emerging issues impacted the overall assurance.
- There were 18 outstanding recommendations and 1 high priority overdue which related to cybersecurity training for Members.

Financial Compliance Report including update on Statement of Accounts

During this reporting, Members were advised that it was important that the processes put in place following the issuing of the Section 24 Statement continued via this quarterly Financial Compliance Report.

The report detailed that the Council were complying with national requirements. Local requirements had been delivered when the budget was approved on the 19th February 2025, particularly in relation to the Treasury Indicators which had continued with the delivery of the Quarter 2 Finance and Performance Report and the Treasury Report.

The key returns for Value Added Tax (VAT) and the Whole of Government Accounts (WOGA) had not been delivered to date. Significant work had been undertaken by the Council's Tax advisors Public Sector Tax, in liaison with His Majesty's Revenue and Customs, in order for the Council to return to normal VAT reporting, with final version working papers provided to

HMRC on the 19th December 2024. Monthly returns were being made from December 2024 onwards. Additional resources had been established to strengthen the finance team in relation to VAT, including a VAT accountant. Mandatory VAT training had taken place for all finance staff and would be rolled out across non finance staff within the organisation.

The WOGA had not been produced for several years and therefore required a substantial mapping exercise. It was unlikely that the Council would be able to achieve this before the Cycle 2 deadline of 3rd October 2026, however, the Council had begun work to achieve a submission over the next three months. The Tech One financial system was also being upgraded to version 25B.

The Council's position on the key closure deliverables was also presented to Members for years 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2024/25.

A Finance Stability Plan had been developed which covered several areas including the Tech One finance system, financial regulations and structure of the finance team:

- A review of the Tech One system had taken place which included a health check with results nearing completion and was expected to include reinstallation of certain elements of the system with suggested fixes to other areas. Any revised implementation would be completed in conjunction with Tech One and would be supported by a full in-house project team to lead on this.
- The Council was stabilising its finance team through the immediate recruitment of several interim staff which were in place to support the finance team. It was noted that a Chief Accountant had been recruited, there was now an additional Senior Finance Business Partner, and two new business partners with a third being recruited.

Key deliverables since the last meeting included:

- A Finance Stability Plan which had been developed to cover a number of areas including the Tech One system, financial regulations and structure of the finance team.
- The Quarter 2 Finance and Performance Report had been produced along with the Quarter 2 Treasury Management Report.

17th February 2026

Standards Regime – Monitoring Officers' Report

The main points highlighted in this report were as follows:

- The report included an updated list of member complaints, including historic complaints as requested by Members.
- All complaints reported at the previous meeting had been resolved.
- Two new public complaints and one new member complaint had been received; the latter remained at initial assessment stage.
- Updates were considered from the Constitution Review Working Group held on 16th September 2025 and Member Development Steering Group held on 27th January 2026.
- It was advised that the Steering Group discussed Potential WhatsApp Policy training for Members; Agreement that most 2026–27 training would be delivered remotely; and Safeguarding training was requested and dates were being arranged.

Risk Management Report/Quarterly Risk Update

The corporate risk register and key developments were as follows:

- All risks had been freshly reviewed and that more changes than usual were expected.
- Proposals for an independent audit of risk management governance would be included for the next audit year.
- LGR risks were being integrated through County level workstreams and tagged within the risk register.
- A new Power BI dashboard had been developed to give real time access to the Chair, Vice Chair, Risk Champion and Portfolio Holder.
- Staff and Member training on risk management would be arranged in the new municipal year.

The key risk changes highlighted were as follows:

- Contract management risk closed and moved to operational level.
- Cyber Security risk increased to 16, reflecting national guidance.
- Planning placed in special measures due to the quality of applications, moved to amber due to increased overturned decisions with risk score of 8.
- Customer Interface Project closed due to LGR context.
- Food waste implementation risk increased following Wyre Forest's withdrawal from joint procurement.
- LGR risk updated with strengthened mitigations and residual risk remained at 12.
- The Section 151 Officer risk retained until permanent recruitment had been completed.

Internal Audit – Progress Report

The main points were considered below:

- There was strong progress in delivering the audit plan, with 188 of 250 days completed by 23rd January 2026.
- Five audits were completed with four since the last meeting.
- Payroll received Substantial Assurance.
- General Ledger received Limited Assurance due to delays in reconciliations relating to historic system implementation issues.
- Health and Safety received Limited Assurance with significant issues in induction training and risk assessment completion.
- Transparency Code Audit gave Reasonable Assurance.
- There was an outstanding High-Risk recommendation for Member Cyber Security Training. It was noted that only one Member remained outstanding.
- Audit Planning for 2026/27 was underway.

Financial Compliance Reporting including Update on Statement of Accounts

The key points are summarised below:

- Value Added Tax (VAT) returns were being restored following extensive work with tax advisors.
- Whole of Government Accounts (WOGA) required remapping, with work scheduled for 2026–27.
- A cash receipting reinstatement project was underway.
- Significant progress was achieved since the Section 24 Notice.

Also during discussions, the Section 151 Officer suggested that a recommendation should be reviewed by the Committee given the external auditors views and opinion remained outstanding therefore the committee could not be fully assured for the auditing of the 2023/24 and 2024/25 accounts. Following discussions the Chairman suggested, and the Board agreed that the recommendation should be deferred until an in-camera session with EY and the Internal Auditor could be arranged. In conclusion the Committee did confirm assurance on progress made against the Section 24 Notice as a suggested alternative recommendation.

Capital Strategy 2026/27 including Treasury Management Strategy

A high-level overview of capital expenditure, borrowing levels, prudential indicators and treasury risk management was provided by the Finance Manager.

Review of Accounting Policies

During this meeting Members were updated on the accounting policies and advised that no changes were required by the accounting policies for 2025/26. The Section 151 Officer assured Members that the policies continued to comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) code and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

16th April 2026

The last meeting of Audit, Standards and Governance Committee in the 2025-26 municipal year at which this Annual Report will be presented. Items considered at this meeting included:

- Standards Regime – Monitoring Officer's Report
- Update on progress made to resolve outstanding VAT position
- External Audit Backstop Report
- Internal Audit Progress Report
- Risk Management Report/Corporate Risk Register
- Risk Champion Update
- Financial Compliance Report including update on Statements of Accounts
- Whistleblowing Policy Update
- Annual Audit, Standards and Governance Committee Report 2025/26

Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services

Bromsgrove District Council

Parkside

Bromsgrove

Worcestershire B61 8DA

Telephone: 01527 64252 Ext 1605

Email: democratic@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROCUREMENT SERVICES



Overview and Scrutiny **ANNUAL REPORT**

2025 - 2026



Bromsgrove
District Council

www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

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FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This year has been as challenging as the previous year, including the number of task groups and workload in general. Once again, additional meetings were held to cope with the increase in work and of course calling upon Members to give up more of their free time. Ensuring scrutiny is carried out in an efficient and robust manner has led to the overwhelming recommendations from meetings and task groups being accepted by the Cabinet, which made it all worthwhile.

There is no doubt the following year will be just as challenging with Local Government Re-organisation (LGR) on the horizon, requiring the number of meetings to increase.

I would like to thank all Members of the Board who have committed their time and energy to the tasks we were confronted with and of course to all those who took part in task groups. I also realise the amount of work this has been placed on our Officers and I am thankful for their help and support.

Councillor Peter McDonald
Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board

INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to present the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report which outlines our work during 2025-2026 (this covers the municipal year from May 2025 to April 2026) and provides general information on the overview and scrutiny processes at Bromsgrove District Council (BDC).

Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the democratic decision-making process in local Councils, where elected Councillors outside of the Cabinet can contribute to shaping Council policy, community well-being and accountability. This is done by reviewing Council services and policies, community issues and key decisions and making recommendations for improvement.

The four key principles of Overview and Scrutiny, as defined by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) the lead organisation supporting Overview and Scrutiny in the country, are:

- provide constructive “critical friend” challenge
- amplify the voice and concerns of the public
- be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
- drive improvement in public services

The Members of the Board consider these principles when selecting topics to investigate whether it is holding the Cabinet to account, reviewing policies, policy development or scrutiny of external bodies.

Agenda Item 14

MEMBERSHIP

(The Board is made up of 11 Members)



**Councillor P. M. McDonald
(Chairman)**



**Councillor A.M. Dale
(Vice-Chairman)**



Councillor S. Ammar



Councillor A. Bailes



Councillor R.A. Bailes



Councillor J. Clarke



Councillor B. Kumar



Councillor R.E. Lambert



Councillor S. A. Robinson



Councillor J. D. Stanley



Councillor H.D.N. Warren-Clarke

THE ROLE OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the Council's political structure and it plays a vital role in improving the services that people of the District use. It does not just look at the way the Council carries out its services, it can look at anything which affects the lives of people within the District and it allows citizens to have a greater say in Council matters.

Overview and Scrutiny allows Councillors to review and scrutinise decisions, look at existing practices and make recommendations to help ensure the residents of Bromsgrove District receive excellent services. The aim is to ensure overview and scrutiny adds value to the Council's decision-making process and makes a positive contribution towards policy development.

The detailed terms of reference and procedure rules for the Overview and Scrutiny Board can be found at Part 5 and Part 12 of the Council's Constitution. The Council's Constitution can be accessed by using the following link.

[Link to the Constitution of Bromsgrove District Council](#)

(Please click on the latest date to access the most recent version of the Council's constitution).

Meetings

Throughout 2025-26, Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings have been taking place in person and were open to the public to attend at Parkside Hall in Bromsgrove. Meetings are live streamed if there is significant local interest in the items being considered at Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings. Meetings of Scrutiny Task Groups and Working Groups continue to be held remotely, since these meetings are private.

REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE BOARD

The Board continued to receive updates to monitor the progress of recommendations it had made, with the recommendations made throughout the year outlined in this report. This contains both recommendations put forward by Task Groups and accepted by the Cabinet, together with recommendations put forward by the Board itself. In respect of Task Groups, the Board does, where necessary, receive an update report 12 months following acceptance of its recommendations.

During the year the Board had made several recommendations. There has been continued support from the relevant Cabinet Members this year, with regular attendance at Overview and Scrutiny meetings in relation to reports concerning Cabinet Members' areas of responsibility. This has given the Cabinet an opportunity to hear first-hand the debate and any recommendations made by the Board. The Chairman of the Board attends Cabinet meetings to present any recommendations made. On several occasions, whilst the Board had not made any recommendations in respect of an item, it had endorsed and/or supported recommendations which were then considered by Cabinet at its meetings.

The Board is due to consider the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2025-26 at the meeting due to be held on 14th April 2026.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

During the course of the 2025/26 municipal year the following recommendations were suggested to Cabinet:

Bromsgrove Town Centre Recycling Bins

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

Planning Enforcement

RECOMMENDED that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) be introduced to measure Worcestershire Regulatory Services' (WRS) Planning Enforcement performance in Bromsgrove and that the KPIs be incorporated into monthly reporting to Members together with enhanced information on live enforcement cases data.

Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme

RECOMMENDED that the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board submit a request on behalf of the Board that Cabinet consider, as an item of urgent business, whether to extend the current public consultation period for the Local Plan.

Housing Task Group

Recommendation 1 – Housing Allocations

Officers approach Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) and jointly explore a startup crisis package for residents living in social housing including the potential of an increase in housing benefit payment to cover the costs of the crisis package. The findings to be completed in three months and reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Recommendation 2 – Housing Allocations

Bromsgrove District Council's preference is for the mix of affordable housing contained within a new development be made up of social rent and shared ownership properties only and exclude outright sales of affordable homes.

Recommendation 3 – Asset Rich and Potentially Revenue Poor

Officers provide Members with costings of bad debt owed to the Council as a result of non – payment of Council tax by residents.

Recommendation 4 – Asset Rich and Potentially Revenue Poor

Officers monitor the number of residents claiming Council Tax Support in housing Bands F, G and H (with metrics built into the performance reporting framework).

Recommendation 5 – Section (S) 106 Contributions

Where a planning application has a material impact on the local community and there is a consideration for S106 contribution allocation, the Ward Member (and neighbouring Ward Member(s)) should be informed and consulted with prior to consideration of the application. A follow up consultation with the Ward Member (and neighbouring Ward Member(s)) should also take place.

Recommendation 6 - Fleeceholding

As part of the Local Government Reorganisation process, the Council:

- a) Notes that the Government is currently analysing the feedback from the consultation which sought views on proposals to implement aspects of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 and further reform related to the charges leaseholders and homeowners on freehold estates, pay and services they receive, which closed on 26th September 2025.
- b) Suggests that a new unitary authority continues to lobby Government on the matter of fleeceholding within Bromsgrove District.

Finance & Budget Working Group

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

THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD'S WORK PROGRAMME

The following items were considered by the Board during the 2025/26 municipal year:

Overviews

- Local Government Re-Organisation All Member Engagement Session
- Installation of EV Chargers
- Local Plan Consultation Methods
- Bromsgrove Town Centre Re-cycling Bins
- Council Tax Recovery
- Planning Enforcement
- Windsor Street (Options Paper)
- Citizens Advice (Uses of Grant Funding)
- Strategic Overview of Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) Services
- Police and Crime Commissioner update
- Planning Advisory Service (PAS)
- Town Centre Parking and ANPR update
- EV Charger Profit Sharing Arrangements update

Pre-Scrutiny

- Contaminated Land Strategy
- Bromsgrove District Plan Consultation
- Bromsgrove Town Centre Strategic Framework
- Expansion of Commercial Waste Collection Services
- Homelessness Prevention Grant and Domestic Abuse Grant
- Windsor Street Site
- Biodiversity Duty Report
- Homelessness Prevention, Rough Sleeper and Domestic Abuse Grants Funding 2027/28 and 2028/29
- Particulate Monitoring

Standard Updates

- Local Government Re-Organisation (LGR) (Regular)
- Local Heritage Action List (Quarterly)
- Levelling-Up Fund Programme (Quarterly)
- Crime and Disorder Scrutiny (Annually)
- Heatwaves Preparedness (Annually)
- Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2025/26

All Member Briefings

- Anti-Social Behaviour (Tools and Powers)

Task Group

In addition to the above, updates were provided throughout the year for the Housing Task Group. The final report which included recommendations was considered by the Board on 18th November 2025.

OVERVIEWS

Local Government Reorganisation All Member Engagement Session Supported by Mutual Ventures

A stakeholder engagement process was being carried out to inform the appraisal process which included a public and local stakeholder engagement session. This stakeholder engagement session sought that all Members of BDC be invited to ensure that Members had an opportunity to provide their views to Mutual Ventures, who were supporting an appraisal of the options under consideration in Worcestershire for LGR.

The options appraisal process was to assess the performance of two options for a unitary structure in Worcestershire which consisted of a unitary council for the whole county of Worcestershire or two unitary councils in Worcestershire which would consist of a north and south divide.

Key lines of enquiry were discussed as part of the stakeholder engagement process to establish the performance of these options in comparison to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) criteria for LGR.

Installation of EV Chargers

The purpose of this report was to outline the Implementation of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure across BDC's owned car parks and land. Key objectives of the project were to increase the availability of EV charging points in public spaces, whilst supporting the Council's Carbon Reduction Strategy.

Bromsgrove Town Centre Recycling Bins

This item reported on recycling and waste collection arrangements in the Bromsgrove Town Centre. The report had been drafted to address a request from the Board raised in February 2025 for a review of the implications of no longer recycling waste on Bromsgrove High Street.

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 was recyclable when sorting by hand was undertaken. The Council was not recycling any waste from Bromsgrove High Street bins because of the cross-contamination of waste.

It was agreed by the Board that 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. The Board proposed the following recommendation:

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

Council Tax Recovery

During consideration of this report, Council Tax debt recovery procedures was provided. This followed a request by the Board for a report to explain the legislative framework governing council tax recovery, outline the procedures applied by the Council for council tax recovery and the use of enforcement agents and which identified the actions the Council could take to improve the recovery process and the barriers to improvement.

It was noted that the Money and Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI) report entitled "In the Public Interest?" argued that legislation governing council tax collection required reform and identified four areas of improvement. The areas included communication with individuals in

debt, speed at which council debt escalated the over-reliance on automated procedures, lack of flexibility in dealing with debt cases and the enforcement action used. The report clarified and responded to these areas of concern, detailing how the Council managed its debt recovery process.

Planning Enforcement

For this reporting Members were reminded that the delivery of the planning enforcement was largely transferred to Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) on 1st June 2024, with investigation of cases the responsibility of WRS and input provided from planning officers where their professional expertise was required. It was highlighted that prior to the formal takeover of the planning enforcement function by WRS, there had been assistance provided to the Council's planning officers with the investigation officer role since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic.

There were 302 cases of alleged planning breaches in 2024/25 which required WRS to undertake investigations. Of these, 5 cases were assigned as priority 1 cases as they satisfied the criteria for this set out in the Enforcement Policy. Of the valid cases, 173 out of 175 were closed and resolved by informal compliance or no issue in 2024/25. There were 304 open planning enforcement cases as of September 2025.

It was stated that the backlog in open cases had fallen slightly from 320 to 304 over the most recent period. Progress in clearing the backlog was slowed by the need to establish and embed the team within Bromsgrove since 1st June 2024 and the complexity of some cases where evidence of harm (in planning terms) had been identified. The short-term additional resource available to WRS to work on clearing the backlog would end in June 2026.

In relation to the number of valid cases with Community Protection Warnings (CPWs) or Community Protection Notices (CPNs) served, it was stated that since April 2025, four additional CPWs and two additional CPNs were served.

Officers highlighted that planning policy allowed retrospective applications to be considered (i.e. applications after an action had been taken) which necessitated the maintenance of an informal approach to negotiate compliance with planning rules.

The benefits of the current approach to Planning Enforcement were set out including that this allowed Planning Officers to focus on planning matters whilst the investigation and enforcement cases were dealt with by WRS.

Following consideration of this item, Members agreed that it should be recommended that there be more information regarding Planning Enforcement cases including monitoring of the WRS performance through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). After consideration the following recommendation was agreed:

RECOMMENDED that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) be introduced to measure Worcestershire Regulatory Services' (WRS) Planning Enforcement performance in Bromsgrove and that the KPIs be incorporated into monthly reporting to Members together with enhanced information on live enforcement cases data.

Windsor Street (Options Paper)

The purpose of this report was to inform the Board on the options for the delivery of housing on the Windsor Street site in Bromsgrove. It was noted that the Windsor Street site had stood derelict since 2014 and that the Council had been successful in obtaining £3,490,000 for the redevelopment of the site from various sources. No BDC funding had been used in the project to date.

It was noted that residential use was considered as most appropriate for the site and only development opportunities for housing had been considered in the report. The three potential delivery options were:

- Option A: Obtain outline planning permission and dispose of the site on the open market.
- Option B: Develop through Spadesbourne Homes Limited and retain market value properties (dispose of affordable units).
- Option C: Enter into partnership with a private developer or a registered social landlord (RSL).

Citizens Advice (Uses of Grant Funding)

During the meeting Members were updated on the uses of grant funding for the Citizens Advice Bromsgrove and Redditch (CABR) charity within the Bromsgrove District.

The following key points were presented to the Board:

- The four key support areas provided by CABR were Core Services, Household Support Fund Distribution, Affordability Assessments and Outreach Development Projects.
- The Funding contribution from BDC was £123,400 with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) adding £23,606 per year.
- BDC was the highest funding contributor in Worcestershire.
- The national average for funding the CABR was £1.34 per head in 2023/2024.
- CABR provided advice which was regulated by the Advice Quality Standard (AQS), Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and Money and Pensions Service (MaPS).
- The charity was supported by 50–60 volunteers. The call answer rate had improved from 24% in 2020 to 38% in 2025.
- In total, 4,710 households within the District received full advice and 773 households received light-touch advice.
- £388,601 income had been gained and £676,674 worth of debts had been managed for local residents.
- The Household Support Fund (HSF) costed £7,000 per annum to deliver with £50,000 of funds distributed.
- £2,745 had been provided a year to carry out affordability assessments for Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) clients.
- £62,000 had been provided by the Council for an Outreach project over 18 month with regular sessions held in the areas of Charford, Catshill, Rubery, Wythall, Alvechurch, Sidemoor and Clent.
- There were future challenges to consider such as increased demands, funding sustainability and the LGR implications.
- There were potential outsourcing opportunities for the follow-on funding from the HSF Scheme, including discretionary housing payments and tenancy support.

Strategic Overview of Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) Services

During this item Members were given a strategic overview of the BDHT Services within the Bromsgrove District which included the following key points:

- BDHT's objectives included being an excellent landlord, employer and a community-based Housing Association.
- Stock levels had grown to over four thousand homes, with a strong focus on the Bromsgrove District.
- Financial viability remained critical with all expenditure funded through rental income.
- Compliance and safety were highlighted as top priorities following national regulatory changes.
- Recruitment and retention of skilled staff were proving challenging.

- Complaints were increasing, partly due to external claim companies and rising customer expectations.

Police and Crime Commissioner (Update)

Following a request from a Board meeting held on 18th November 2026 the representative for the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), accompanied remotely by a local inspector provided a strategic update to the Board with the key points discussed as follows:

- Policing remained predominantly people based, however, pay pressures continued to exceed central grant increases.
- West Mercia Police had grown in officer numbers significantly but rising pay scales created budget strains.
- Civilian workforce reductions had been actioned but frontline focus was being protected.
- Overall crime continued to fall across the District but outcomes of successful investigations remained a key area for improvement.
- Focus centred on prompt investigations, file quality and improving justice outcomes for victims.
- The PCC emphasised the importance of cooperation with District Councils on community safety and early prevention.
- A renewed emphasis was placed on Councils to raise localised concerns directly.

Planning Advisory Service (PAS)

Following discussions at its Board meeting held on 6th January 2026, Members requested the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) findings report be provided. This session sought to include all Members of BDC to ensure they had an opportunity to hear the presentation and to provide their views and questions to the consultants in person.

An initial overview was provided and it was explained that the PAS review had been commissioned to assess governance, relationships, barriers to decision making and improvements required for Development Management, Local Plan preparation, Officer-Member working and Readiness for forthcoming planning reforms.

A presentation to discuss the Development Management Workstream was carried out with the key points highlighted as below:

- Procedures and protocols were generally sound.
- Key issues related to strained Officer–Member relationships.
- There was insufficient early engagement prior to Planning Committee.
- There was a need for a “reset” of working practices.

Recommendations included:

- Improved collaboration.
- Training on defensible decision making.
- Addressing relationships with WCC Highways.
- Review of enforcement processes.
- Improving Planning Committee focus.
- Reviewing livestream retention.
- Increasing Member involvement at pre application stage.
- Improving attendance at site visits.

A presentation was also provided to Members to discuss the Local Plan Workstream. The main points highlighted were:

- A significant divergence between Members on the draft development strategy.
- Lack of political buy in and sense of “ownership” of the plan.
- Insufficient shared vision for the District’s future.
- Evidence base gaps (e.g. Green Belt assessment, infrastructure planning).
- Poor relationships with WCC on transport and education.
- Requirement for clearer governance of the Strategic Planning Steering Group (SPSG).
- Importance of a 30-month statutory timetable under the new system.
- Emphasis on risk management, programme management and Member training.
- Need to develop a spatial vision and place making objectives.

Town Centre Parking and ANPR (Update)

During a Board meeting held on 18th November 2026, it was requested and agreed that a Town Centre Parking and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) update be provided.

During the Board’s meeting held on 10th February 2026 it was reported that Town Centre parking capacity remained sufficient, with peak demand significantly below the 1,013 available spaces. St John Street and Windsor Street car parks continued to experience the highest utilisation, while School Drive, North Bromsgrove and Stourbridge Road remained underused.

The Board noted the following redevelopment considerations:

- Churchfields remained closed due to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) risks, with high costs required for reopening and ongoing maintenance.
- Stourbridge Road was subject to an existing development agreement and observed usage indicated high weekday occupancy by season ticket holders.
- School Drive was identified as suitable for redevelopment due to consistently low usage and a potentially higher capital receipt.

Even with redevelopment of one or more sites, overall parking demand was predicted to remain comfortably met.

Sanders Park Car Park was being used by Town Centre workers for all day free parking, however, options were presented to introduce time limit charges or MiPermit only operation.

Season ticket usage at Parkside had raised concerns from local businesses. Survey findings indicated most users were season ticket holders rather than Council Staff. Options included amending which car parks accepted season tickets.

ANPR implementation was reported as not viable due to legal constraints, operational requirements for barriers, cost implications and no reduction in enforcement workload.

Out of town enforcement had met the agreed minimum requirement, with between 26% to 29% of patrol time spent outside the Town Centre. Increasing enforcement would require additional staffing at significant cost.

Financial implications were highlighted, including income levels, resurfacing costs and the financial impact of potential car park redevelopments.

The report concluded that a strategic, place-based approach was required to support Town Centre accessibility and economic activity, with further on-site counts recommended.

EV Charger Profit Sharing Arrangements (Update)

During a Board meeting held on 6th January 2026 Members raised frustrations regarding delays in progression for the update on Electric Vehicle (EV) Charger profit sharing arrangement negotiations which had been requested during previous Board meetings. Members noted that a meeting had been held with the Leader and relevant Officers to discuss progression and that a briefing paper would be provided to Members of the Board at the next meeting to be held in February 2026.

During the Board meeting held on 10th February 2026 an update was provided with the main points considered by the Board:

- The Council had sought to utilise its own land to provide Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) for financial viability.
- Zest Eco Limited procured the contract to undertake a further exploration to expand EVCI across land that were not covered by the taxi scheme.
- Three sites were identified as being viable; two sites had completed installation and one site was in progress.
- Following queries from the Board, a review had been carried out to explore the income terms and conditions of the contract.
- Barnt Green Parish Council advised that they had used the same Council supplier Equans as used for the Plug-in Taxi Programme.
- There were legal implications and both parties would need to agree to vary the agreement if seeking early payment. Alternatively, a break notice/termination clause within the contract was suggested as another option, however, compensation costs may be payable, given the expenditure incurred to date for installations.

Other Overview items due to be scrutinised at its April meeting are as follows:

- Envirocrime (to include Environment Crime update, Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy and Littering from Vehicles).
- Permission to Revoke the First Homes Policy
- Renters Rights Act 2025

PRE-SCRUTINY

Contaminated Land Strategy

During this meeting the Contaminated Land Strategy was presented with the key points discussed:

- The new inspection strategy aimed to replace the previous version and meet the requirements of the statutory guidance which was issued in 2012.
- The strategy outlined the process for the review of potential contaminated land sites within the District and the prioritisation methodology used.
- The report aimed to provide an overview of the framework that existed in respect of contaminated land.
- Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 placed a duty on Local Authorities to review and assess the significant possibility of harm to human health arising from contaminated land.
- Contaminated land legislation should only be used when there were no other alternative mechanisms available. However, the framework was predominately reviewed through the Planning and Development Control process.
- The revised report reflected the gradual reduction and withdrawal of funding from Central Government.
- To date no sites had been declared as “Contaminated Land” by BDC, however, several sites of concern had been subject to detailed inspection.
- Planning policies encouraged the reuse of Brownfield land.

Bromsgrove Town Centre Strategic Framework

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 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:

- 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 also be provided as and where necessary.

Expansion of Commercial Waste Collection Service

This report set out proposals for the expansion of the Council's commercial waste collection service. It was stated that with the provisions of the Environment Act 2021, businesses were required to separate food waste (and microbusiness due to be required to do the same from April 2027), which afforded increased opportunities for service growth as there would be growth in demand for commercial food waste services.

It was highlighted that the Council's Commercial Waste Collection Service had expanded considerably since its inception in 2015, however, in excess of an £800k annual income would be placed at risk if the Council could not provide a compliant service.

The commercial waste service had been a profit-maker for the Council and only recently saw increased costs as a result of wider fleet and maintenance issues within the service. The recommendations in the report were to address this with the purchase of two Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCVs) designed to reduce reliance on hire vehicles in the long term.

Homelessness Prevention Grant and Domestic Abuse Grant

The purpose of this report was to approve how BDC would allocate government homelessness related grants for 2026/27 and to seek delegated authority to manage any unallocated funding during the year.

Key Points were highlighted as follows:

- From 2026/27 Government would merge several homelessness grants into a single Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Grant, expecting to be in a three-year settlement.
- Around 51% of the current Homelessness Prevention Grant would be moved into a Revenue Support Grant but the Council proposed ringfencing this money for homelessness prevention.
- Total expected funding for 2026/27 included:
 - o Homelessness Grant: £112k
 - o Homelessness Prevention Grant: £349,018k
 - o Rough Sleeping Prevention & Recovery: £34,899k
 - o Domestic Abuse New Burdens Funding: £35,744k
 - o Total: £531,661k

Funding was allocated to a mix of temporary accommodation provision, voluntary sector partners, youth homelessness services, tenancy sustainment and support, debt advice, rough sleeper outreach, mental health work and commissioning specific posts.

The Homelessness Grant Allocation of approximately £495,917k included:

- BDHT Housing Agency staffing
- Temporary accommodation units
- Severe Weather Emergency Provision
- St Basils Foyer and Crash Pad
- Support for young people, ex-offenders, rough sleepers and tenancy sustainment
- CAB debt advice & affordability assessments
- Housing First/Housing Led model
- Empty Homes Officer (part-time)

The Domestic Abuse Grant of £35,744k included:

- County domestic abuse co ordinator and research officer
- Housing Options top up
- Furniture project (NewStarts)
- Basement Project support

Without this funding many voluntary sector services would cease, increasing homelessness and pressures on council services. Funding helped to maintain existing accommodation, reduce rough sleeping, mitigate financial hardship and enable victims of domestic abuse to access safe accommodation. The funding was provided as a recognition of affordability challenges, reducing housing turnover and limited social housing availability.

Windsor Street Site

The purpose of this report was to recommend that the Windsor Street brownfield site in Bromsgrove Town Centre be redeveloped for residential use and to identify the preferred delivery model. The site had been vacant since 2014, posing issues with vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Redevelopment had previously failed due to abnormal contamination costs and planning concerns.

The Council had successfully secured £14.5m of Levelling Up Funding with £3.49m allocated to Windsor Street, plus extra funding from UKSPF of £84k, One Public Estate (OPE) of £100k and Brownfield Land Release Fund (BLRF) of £722k.

Phase One remediation was completed, however were awaiting an Environment Agency review. Phase Two remediation works were expected to be completed in approximately 6 months' time. Housing delivery would not be delayed due to planning works which were still required to be completed.

The Board considered the various options, however, Option D - Partner with a Registered Social Landlord was considered the preferred option for the following reasons:

- Allowed 50% affordable housing, modern low carbon homes and better alignment with local housing need.
- Funding opportunity through Homes England.
- Construction was expected to begin early 2027.
- Regenerated a key town centre site.
- Met the housing need while protecting the Green Belt areas.
- Increased footfall and supported local businesses.
- Delivered environmental improvements through brownfield remediation.

Biodiversity Duty Report

This report 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 with a 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.

Homelessness Prevention, Rough Sleeper and Domestic Abuse Grants Funding 2027/28 and 2028/29

Reporting on the three-year Government grant for homelessness prevention, rough sleeper outreach and domestic abuse services was presented. The Board were informed that the funding had been 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 and would be covered by separate revenue funding.
- Government targets were to reduce rough sleeping by 50% and reduce families in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Particulate Monitoring

The Board were presented with 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 included a combination of extended sensors and a mobile “super site” study with an estimated cost of £150k.

STANDARD UPDATES

Levelling-Up Fund Programme (Quarterly)

During various meetings, updates on the Levelling Up Projects at Windsor Street, Nailers Yard (former Market Hall site) and the Public Realm works were discussed.

The following key areas were discussed during the course of the municipal year:

22 July 2025

Windsor Street

- Groundwater monitoring was ongoing until mid-August 2025. If PFAS/PFOS (per and polyfluorinated alkyl substances) levels were high, six months of remediation would follow which was due to finish in January 2026.
- The project remained on track and within budget.
- Options paper on future housing delivery was scheduled for September 2025 to the Board and in November 2025 to Cabinet.

Nailers Yard

- The project had been delayed six weeks due to ground obstructions.
- SCP Transport Planning were preparing a travel plan and welcome pack. Some planning condition wording could change due to WCC ending Modeshift STARS.
- GJS Dillon was appointed in December 2024 to market the commercial space with early interest reported.
- The Full Business Case (FBC) was being prepared to draw down £2.425m of former Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) funds which was expected in 2026/27.
- The programme budget was originally £16.103m with an additional £1.08m awarded and planned GBSLEP funding.
- The total estimated programme costs at this stage were £18.65m.

28 October 2025

Windsor Street

- Phase One remediation was completed and Environment Agency (EA) technical feedback was expected in October 2025.
- Phase Two remediation was likely with completion estimated in May 2026.
- Cabinet was due to review housing options in November 2025.

Nailers Yard

- Culvert works costs rose to £1.6m, increasing programme costs by £165k. An urgent decision was due in August 2025 which added £500k which included £335k contingency costs.
- Completion date had moved from January to 4th May 2026.
- Strong commercial interest continued and service charge arrangements were progressing.
- FBC for GBSLEP funding was ongoing.
- Total secured funding increased to £17.694m with an estimated final cost of £19.8m.
- Potential risks identified at both Nailers Yard were culvert, electrics and layout works and Windsor Street were EA sign-off with delivery options.

6 January 2026

Windsor Street

- Phase Two remediation required six months treatment plus six months monitoring.
- Cabinet approved redevelopment in partnership with a Registered Social Landlord (RSL).

Nailers Yard

- Construction was progressing towards May 2026 completion date.
- Bruton Knowles was appointed as the property management agent.
- The pavilion building operational model was under review.

Local Heritage Action List (Quarterly)

During various quarterly updates for the Local Heritage Action List the following key areas were considered:

22nd July 2025

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 the 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.

28th October 2025

- Progress on the Local Heritage List had been delayed but there were mitigation steps in place at the application stage to identify any buildings of local significance.
- The first tranche of parishes had been adopted with the website updated and owners had also been notified accordingly.
- The draft list for Wythall had been completed and work was ongoing for the Lickey and Blackwell areas.
- There were staffing challenges as two Conservation Officers had resigned. The part-time Principal Conservation Officer remained to cover the work. A consultant had been appointed to assist with the Local Heritage Lists and recruitment was also underway to fill the vacant posts.

6th January 2026

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

Worcestershire Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

The Council's representative on the Worcestershire-wide Health Overview and Scrutiny must be a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and is required to provide the Board with regular updates on the work being carried out. The Board's representative for the municipal year 2025-26 was agreed as Councillor B. Kumar.

During the year Councillor Kumar provided comprehensive and informed updates on meetings of HOSC and responded to questions from Members on matters including:

- Routine immunisation
- Engaging Neighbourhoods and Community in Health Improvements
- Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA)
- Winter Planning
- Annual review of Public Health
- Overview from West Midlands Ambulance Service
- Access to GP Appointments (including out of hours)
- Access to NHS Dental Services

Local Government Re-organisation (LGR) (Update)

During a meeting held on 6th January 2026 the Board requested that regular updates and progress on LGR be provided.

During a meeting held on 10th February 2026 an update was provided which included:

- Worcestershire remained at Stage Three of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) process.
- Two proposals had been submitted and the statutory consultation had been launched the previous week.
- A decision on implementation was expected in July 2026.
- A Countywide Programme Management Office (PMO) had been set up with Bromsgrove's Transformation Lead as Senior Responsible Officer (SRO). The focus areas included: Finance, Legal, HR, IT and Service Delivery (cross-cutting).
- An internal LGR Roots programme was supporting staff through change.
- Externally, District Councils had refreshed the partnership website for TransformingWorcestershire.co.uk.
- A new corporate LGR risk had been added to the Council's risk register.
- Residual risk was assessed as Medium, largely due to uncertainties in costings and capacity.
- Corporate risks had been redeveloped and would be reported to the Audit, Standards and Governance meeting which would be held on 17th February 2026.

During a meeting held on 24th March 2026, an update report outlined Bromsgrove's position within the Government's seven stage LGR process with Members noting were at the Statutory Consultation Stage 3, which closed on 26th March 2026.

The key points raised were as follows:

- Worcestershire remained at Stage 3 of the MHCLG process.
- Workstreams on Finance, HR, Legal, IT and Services were progressing.
- A MHCLG "Listening Meeting" took place on 11th March which was supported by KPMG.

- Devolution footprint discussions had advanced with Worcestershire Leaders having agreed a joint position with Herefordshire and exploring alignment with Warwickshire/Gloucestershire.
- Future updates may be limited until Government decisions were provided which were due in the Summer of 2026.
- LGR and Devolution remained a key Corporate Risk.
- District involvement in strategic planning (SDS) would be retained until at least April 2028.

Crime and Disorder (Yearly)

The annual statutory review outlined partnership activity from January 2025 to February 2026.

The key priority areas were outlined as follows:

- Public place violence and serious violence duty
- Anti-social behaviour (ASB), nuisance and environmental issues
- Shoplifting and neighbourhood crime
- Protecting vulnerable communities
- Serious organised crime (SOCJAG model)

The key activity delivered were outlined as follows:

- 'Right Path' youth violence intervention (with 21 young people being supported).
- Respect Programme engaging 250+ vulnerable young people.
- Redeployable Close Circuit Television (CCTV) deployments district-wide.
- Nominated Neighbour Scheme and targeted support for older/vulnerable residents.
- Domestic abuse support through R.U.N Our Space CIC.
- Significant partnership work with the Police on hotspot patrols, knife crime (Sceptre Week) and illegal vape enforcement.

It was also reported that progress was strong across priority areas despite reduced Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) ring-fenced funding of 15% reduction. The Partnership continued to respond to complex ASB, crime prevention needs and safeguarding vulnerabilities.

Other Standard items to be heard at its April meeting were as follows:

Heatwaves Preparedness (Yearly)

The purpose of this yearly heatwave preparedness report is to ensure accountability, evaluate readiness and enhance the Council's response to rising extreme heat risks.

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2025/26

This annual report.

WORKING GROUPS

Finance & Budget Working Group (FBWG)

This Group met on six occasions during the year with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling in attendance at all the Group's meetings, together with the Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) and the Head of Finance and Customer Services.

The list below contains some of the topics/reports which the Working Group had considered and gives an insight into the work that has been carried out:

- 2025-26 Budget
- Medium Term Financial Plan 2025-26 to 2027-28 – Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 Reports
- Finance and Performance Monitoring Reports
- The Financial Outturn Report
- Council Tax Empty Homes Discounts and Premiums report
- Council Tax Support Scheme
- Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Relief Policy
- Council Tax and Business Rates Yield 2025-26
- Financial Recovery Plan
- Blue Badge Holders Parking Proposal
- Ward Funds Proposal

During the course of the municipal year the following key areas were considered by the Board:

17th June 2025

Members received a report requesting for the Chairman and Members to be appointed to the Finance and Budget Working Group for the 2025/26 municipal year. Members that expressed an interest in joining the group were Councillors S. Ammar, R.J. Hunter, S.T. Nock and P.M. McDonald. The Board noted that Councillor C.A. Hotham also expressed an interest, should there be a relevant vacancy available.

22nd July 2025

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.

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. The following was agreed as recommendations:

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

9th September 2025

The update on membership of the Finance and Budget Working Group was discussed and Members were reminded that there were four Councillors currently represented on the Working Group as Councillors A. Bailes, E. Gray, P. McDonald and S. Nock and there remained three vacant seats. It was noted that since the last meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Board, three Councillors had expressed an interest in joining the Working Group as Councillors S. Ammar, S. Colella and C. Hotham. The Board considered these requests and on being put to the vote it was agreed that the Councillors were to be appointed to the Finance and Budget Working Group.

The Chairman of the Finance and Budget Working Group, Councillor P. McDonald, updated the Board on the recent meeting which took place on 5th September 2025.

18th November 2025

After consideration of the Finance and Budget Working Group Membership Report and terms of reference the Board agreed to maintain six Members on the Working Group. The Chairman explained that should the three current vacancies as reflected in the report remain after the Board had been approached, Members who did not sit on the scrutiny board and were also not a Cabinet Member may be appointed to fill the vacancies.

6th January 2026

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. The newly appointed members included Councillors B. Kumar, C.A. Hotham and B.M. McEldowney.

10th February 2026

The Board received an update on information which was in progress for the forthcoming FBWG. Members of the Board agreed to a meeting prior the Cabinet meeting to be held on 18th February 2026 to discuss its recommendations.

TASK GROUPS

Housing Task Group

During various meetings the Board were informed of progress of the Housing Task Group. Members noted that the group were on track and had covered each of the terms of reference items for investigation in various meetings with Officers.

The Housing Task Group's final report was presented to the Board on 18th November 2025. The report would also be subsequently considered at the Cabinet meeting held in January 2026.

The following recommendations were included in the final report as follows:

Recommendation 1 – Housing Allocations

Officers approach Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) and jointly explore a startup crisis package for residents living in social housing including the potential of an increase in housing benefit payment to cover the costs of the crisis package. The findings to be completed in three months and reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Recommendation 2 – Housing Allocations

Bromsgrove District Council's preference is for the mix of affordable housing contained within a new development be made up of social rent and shared ownership properties only and exclude outright sales of affordable homes.

Recommendation 3 – Asset Rich and Potentially Revenue Poor

Officers provide Members with costings of bad debt owed to the Council as a result of non – payment of Council tax by residents.

Recommendation 4 – Asset Rich and Potentially Revenue Poor

Officers monitor the number of residents claiming Council Tax Support in housing Bands F, G and H (with metrics built into the performance reporting framework).

Recommendation 5 – Section (S) 106 Contributions

Where a planning application has a material impact on the local community and there is a consideration for S106 contribution allocation, the Ward Member (and neighbouring Ward Member(s)) should be informed and consulted with prior to consideration of the application. A follow up consultation with the Ward Member (and neighbouring Ward Member(s)) should also take place.

Recommendation 6 - Fleeceholding

As part of the Local Government Reorganisation process, the Council:

- a) Notes that the Government is currently analysing the feedback from the consultation which sought views on proposals to implement aspects of the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 and further reform related to the charges leaseholders, and homeowners on freehold estates, pay and services they receive, which closed on 26th September 2025.
- b) Suggests that a new unitary authority continues to lobby Government on the matter of fleeceholding within Bromsgrove District.

For Task Groups the detailed final reports of all these investigations can be found on the Council's website within the Overview and Scrutiny section.

CONCLUSION

A significant amount of pre-scrutiny work had been carried out by the Board throughout the year and based on detailed discussions, a number of recommendations had been made to Cabinet and Full Council. Some of these recommendations were subsequently approved by the decision-making bodies. In addition to this, the work of the the Finance and Budget Working Group has been useful in providing Members with an opportunity to look at complex finance reports in some considerable detail.

During the year the Housing Task Group had completed its final report along with recommendations which were considered at the Board meeting held on 18th November 2025 and subsequently considered at the Cabinet meeting held in January 2026.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Overview and Scrutiny Board Meetings

Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings are open to the public. To find out more visit our website at [Bromsgrove Overview and Scrutiny](#) or telephone 01527 881288 and ask to speak to the Democratic Services Officer.

Public Involvement

If you would like to have your say on issues being considered by Overview and Scrutiny or to suggest a topic for consideration you can email scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk or complete the form on the Council's website at [Scrutiny - Public Participation](#)

Giving Evidence

Members of the public or organisations with a special interest or knowledge about a particular topic being considered by Overview and Scrutiny can put forward evidence to a Committee or appear as a witness to give evidence for an investigation. If you think you or your organisation might be able to participate in an issue currently under review, please contact us.

If you have a personal issue with a Council service you may find it more useful to contact your local ward Councillor who can help you decide the best way to take it forward.

Contact Overview and Scrutiny

If you would like to find out more about any aspect of the Overview and Scrutiny Board then you can email scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk or telephone 01527 881288 and ask to speak to the Democratic Services Officer.

Overview and Scrutiny

Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services

Bromsgrove District Council

Parkside, Market Street, Bromsgrove B61 8DA

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Bromsgrove District Council – Council Meeting 14th October 2026

Recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 22nd July 2026

Low Cost Housing Capital Receipts

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) all low cost housing receipts be used by the Council to increase the supply of temporary accommodation by purchasing suitable dwellings.
- 2) delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director Community and Housing Services following consultation with the Cabinet Member of Housing to purchase properties.

Treasury Management Outturn Report 2025/26

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the Council's Treasury performance for the financial year 25/26 be noted; and
- 2) the position in relation to the Council's Prudential indicators be noted.

Quarter 4 Financial Monitoring and Outturn Report 2025/26

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) The 2025/26 revenue outturn position is an overspend of £5,480 which will be funded by an allocation from General Fund Balance.
- 2) The General Fund Opening Balance of £13.382m will be reduced to £13.150m as a result of this overspend and the net transfer to Ward Budget Reserves previously agreed with members.
- 3) The 2025/26 capital outturn position is £16.943m spend against a total approved programme of £21.877m. The net balance of £4.934m will be carried forward and included within the 2026/27 capital programme.
- 4) The Ward Budget allocation for 2025/26 of £62,000 had approved allocations at £55,402 as at 31 March 2026, resulting in £6,598 which is transferred to General Fund reserves.
- 5) The balance of Earmarked Reserves as at 31 March 2026 is £14.169m.

Recommendations from the Cabinet meeting held on 16th September 2026

BDC Equality Strategy 2026 – 2030 (Including Engagement Policy)

RECOMMENDED that the Equality Strategy 2026 – 2030 (including the Engagement Policy 2026 - 2030) be approved.

Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Policy

RECOMMENDED that the revised section 13A(1)(C) policy be approved and adopted.

Cabinet
2026

Wednesday 22 July

Low Cost Housing Capital Receipts

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Sue Baxter
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Judith Willis Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services
Report Author : Amanda Delahunty	Job Title Housing Development and Enabling Manager Contact email: a.delahunty@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881269
Wards Affected	No specific ward relevance
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	Not Applicable
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	Housing
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND that

- 1) all low cost housing receipts are used by the Council to increase the supply of temporary accommodation by purchasing suitable dwellings.
- 2) delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director Community and Housing Services following consultation with the Cabinet Member of Housing to purchase properties.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Bromsgrove District Council launched a low cost housing scheme approximately 28 years ago which provided an opportunity for those on lower incomes and first time buyers to purchase properties at a discounted rate owning 70% of the value, with the local authority owning the remaining 30% interest in the property. There is no rent charged on the 30% and therefore no management of the scheme required on a day to day basis as they are simply a type of low cost home ownership product. Through this scheme the Council currently holds a 30% share in each of the 111 remaining low cost housing properties.

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Wednesday 22 July

- 2.2 A report was taken to Cabinet on the 1st February 2017 and Members resolved that: “As and when these properties are offered for sale, so far as possible the Council’s share should also be sold and; That any Capital receipt be ring-fenced to provide funding to assist the Council in meeting its Strategic Purpose “Help me find somewhere to live in my locality”. The Strategic Housing Team manage the process of the sale on behalf of BDC.
- 2.3 A further report was taken to Cabinet on the 10th December 2024 which recommended that:
- i. the low cost housing receipts from the sale of these properties are used to purchase existing properties, flip shared ownership into social or affordable rented accommodation or invest in new build developments with Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (bdht) to increase the supply of affordable housing and temporary accommodation to meet the growing demand.
 - ii. delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director Community and Housing Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing to approve individual proposals for new developments or the purchase of existing satisfactory dwellings and flipping Shared Ownership to affordable or social rented properties and the spend relating to these, as and when they are brought forward.
- 2.4 Due to capacity issues this initiative has not been taken forward. The requirement for additional temporary accommodation is still needed in order to reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast (B&B) and therefore officers propose that this funding is used by the Council to purchase properties to be used as temporary accommodation.
- 2.5 It is anticipated that by utilising Low Cost Housing Receipts in a variety of ways, a new supply of temporary accommodation can be made available to support the Council to improve the quality of temporary accommodation and reduce the use of B&B’s, ensuring that the Government’s target that families do not occupy B&B accommodation for more the 6 weeks is achieved.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 The additional resource required to implement this initiative will be absorbed by the Redditch Borough Council Housing Development Officer posts.

- 3.2 It is proposed that officers will look at either purchasing properties from developers delivered through Section 106 requirements or with estate agents for the purchase of suitable open market dwellings. This work will be carried out by the Redditch Borough Council Housing Development Officers and time taken recharged to Redditch.
- 3.3 The management of the properties will be undertaken by a Registered Provider who has experience of dealing with Temporary Accommodation under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) following an appropriate procurement exercise. The management of the SLA will be carried out by the Housing Strategy Team alongside their management of the Housing Agency Agreement with Bromsgrove District Housing Trust.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The low cost housing receipts currently stand at £620,812.26 with a further two sales expected within 2026. These will be utilised to bring forward more temporary accommodation.
- 4.2 Purchases from the open market would be subject to an estate agent valuation and purchases from a developer under a section 106 affordable housing contribution would be subject to a RICS (red book) valuation. The expected associated costs with the purchase are £2,000 per property
- 4.3 These properties would provide an asset to the Council that are likely to increase in value over time based on the current housing market.
- 4.4 The cost of running the new temporary accommodation would be met within the existing temporary accommodation budget and rental income during occupation. The running costs of these properties is expected to be £6,500 per unit.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The proposals detailed in this report will support the council in meeting its duties under the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. In addition, B&B accommodation is not deemed to be suitable for pregnant women and families with children, and for this reason is unlawful if used beyond 6 weeks as set out in the 2003 Bed and Breakfast Order. Longer term use of B&B accommodation puts the local authority at risk of legal challenge, reputational damage and/or a 'maladministration' finding by the Ombudsman.

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- 5.2 The Council is able to hold up to 1,000 properties without the requirement to implement a Housing Revenue Account.
- 5.3 The Housing Act 1985 Part 2 Section 9 permits a local authority to build/acquire new housing.

5 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Re-organisation

- 6.1 Any assets held by the council will be transferred to the new unitary authority that will have responsibility to provide temporary accommodation.

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 Housing – this approach will ensure more good quality temporary accommodation is available.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.3 This initiative to increase the supply of temporary accommodation aligns with Bromsgrove District Council's commitment to environmental sustainability and climate change mitigation. The increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events and the cost-of-living crisis, exacerbated by climate change, contribute to rising homelessness. By providing good quality temporary accommodation, this initiative will help protect vulnerable households from the direct and indirect impacts of climate change.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.4 The delivery of good quality temporary accommodation will have a positive impact on those who are homeless.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Unless the supply of temporary accommodation is increased across the District the council will be unable to meet its obligations in respect

Cabinet 2026

Wednesday 22 July

of homeless families and costs of extended periods in B&B accommodation and temporary accommodation will continue to rise.

- 7.2 Placing families in B&B accommodation where facilities are shared with vulnerable adults and with households not known to the placing authority creates additional safeguarding risks.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background Papers

Cabinet Report 10th December 2024 : Bromsgrove Low Cost Housing Capital Receipts and Increasing the Supply of Temporary Accommodation Report

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Sue Baxter Cabinet Member for Planning, WRS and Strategic Housing	23.6.26
Lead Director / Head of Service	Judith Willis Assistant Director Community and Housing Services	19.6.26
Financial Services	James Walton, Section 151 Officer	23.6.26
Legal and Democratic Services	Nicola Cummings, Principal Solicitor – Governance and Jess Bayley-Hill, Principal Democratic Services Officer	24/06/26
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Emily Payne	N/A

Cabinet **2026**

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	Engagement and Equalities Officer	
Climate Change (if climate change implications apply)	Matthew Eccles Climate Change Manager	23.6.26

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Cabinet

22nd July 2026

Treasury Management Outturn Report 2025/26

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Nock – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Debra Goodall
Report Authors	Assistant Director of Finance and Customer Services Debra.Goodall@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	All
Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to set out the annual outturn for 2025/26 on the Council's Capital and Treasury Management Strategies, including all prudential indicators.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are asked to:

- **Recommend the Council's Treasury performance for the financial year 25/26.**
- **Recommend the position in relation to the Council's Prudential indicators.**

3. BACKGROUND

Introduction

- 3.1 The Authority has adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice* (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Authority to approve, as a minimum, treasury management semi-annual and annual outturn reports.
- 3.2 This report includes the requirement in the 2021 Code, mandatory from 1st April 2023, of reporting the treasury management prudential indicators. The non-treasury prudential indicators are incorporated in the Authority's normal quarterly revenue report.

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- 3.3 The Authority's treasury management strategy for 2025/26 was approved in February 2025. The Authority has invested and borrowed substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of risk remains central to the Authority's treasury management strategy.

External Context

- 3.4 **Economic background:** The financial year was largely dominated by two periods of significant uncertainty and volatility. The first being the US trade tariff 'Liberation Day' in April 2025 and the second was the US/Israel war with Iran at the end of February 2026.
- 3.5 After the initial fallout from US trade tariffs, the following months saw some improvements as equity markets made gains and bond yields eased modestly. However, in the UK this trend in bond yields reversed somewhat as an uncertain economic outlook together with concerns around the government's fiscal position and autumn Budget saw 'term premia' rise as investors demanded a higher return for holding gilts.
- 3.6 The Budget itself was more muted than had been expected. Despite a weak economic outlook, this helped UK markets perform better with gilt yields trending downwards, inflation easing, and expectations for cuts in Bank of England (BoE) Bank Rate increasing.
- 3.7 The end of February 2026 saw the start of the war between US/Israel and Iran. The conflict caused oil and other commodity prices to rise sharply as the shipping lanes in the region became effectively closed, restricting global oil supply. At the end of the period, the economic outlook remained highly uncertain in terms of its impact on inflation as well as countries' fiscal and monetary policy conditions around the globe.
- 3.8 Prior to the start of the war, headline UK consumer price inflation (CPI) inflation had generally been trending downwards, albeit the 3% in February 2026 was unchanged from January. Core CPI also stayed put at 3.1%. Inflation was expected to fall further over the coming months to the BoE's 2% target, but the war changed this. Inflation is now expected to rise again, but how quickly and by how much depends on the duration of the war and how long commodity prices are elevated.
- 3.9 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported the UK economy expanded by 0.1% in Q4 2025. This followed previous modest gains of 0.2% in Q2 and by 0.1% in Q3. Of the subsequent monthly figures, the ONS estimated that GDP showed no growth in January 2026. As this is from before the war started the impact on growth will not be seen formally in the data for a couple more months.

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- 3.10 While the most recent labour market figures were slightly better than expected, the general trend has been one of persistent weakness. In the three months to January 2026, the unemployment rate rose to 5.2% (from 5.1%), while the employment rate held at 75.1%. Despite inflation being expected to rise in the coming months, labour market conditions remain loose and so any upward pressure on wages from general inflation is likely to be tempered by the weaker labour market environment.

- 3.11 After cutting Bank Rate to 3.75% in December 2025, the BoE's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted 5-4 to hold rates in February 2026 and then unanimously to do so again in March. Until the war started, financial markets were expecting Bank Rate to be cut to 3.5% at the March meeting. However, the conflict in the Middle East quickly changed this. The MPC noted the risks to both inflation and growth and indicated they could move rates either up or down depending on the conditions. Financial markets quickly responded to this by pricing in rate hikes.

- 3.12 Following the March MPC meeting, Arlingclose, the authority's treasury adviser, revised its central interest rate view and now predicts Bank Rate will be held at 3.75%. However, the conflict makes the outlook for rates highly uncertain. In the short-term the risks are to the upside with the chance of higher Bank Rate should the MPC decide it wishes to quickly quash potential second-round effects from higher inflation. Further out, if Bank Rate is hiked quickly, the pace and magnitude of subsequent cuts could take it far lower than was previously anticipated as policymakers add significant stimulus to a much weaker economic growth outlook.

- 3.13 The US Federal Reserve had been cutting rates over the period, reducing Fed Funds Rate target range by 0.25% at its December meeting to 3.50%-3.75%. At the three subsequent meetings, the rate was held at the same range. Policymakers noted that while inflation was elevated, economic activity had been expanding but the war with Iran made the path of monetary policy highly uncertain. Despite this, the Fed still suggested that further rate cuts were likely in 2026 and 2027.

- 3.14 The European Central Bank (ECB) has kept its key interest rates on hold since June 2025, maintaining the deposit rate at 2.0% and main refinancing rate at 2.15%. At its March 2026 meeting, the ECB noted the war in the Middle East had significantly increased uncertainty, creating upside risks for inflation and downside risks for growth, leading it to revise up its forecasts accordingly.

- 3.15 **Financial markets:** After declining sharply early in the financial year following the announcement of US tariffs, sentiment in financial markets had improved but equity and bond markets remained volatile throughout. However, the latter part of the period was dominated by the US/Israel war with Iran, which saw equity markets fall sharply, and

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bond yields rise as concerns over the inflationary impact from sharply higher oil and other commodity prices outweighed the flight-to-quality into government bonds often seen in conflicts.

- 3.16 Equity markets had been registering gains after the declines during the April sell-off, but the war reversed this and markets saw another sharp drawdown. Both the FTSE 100 and 250 fell by around 10% over the month from the start of the conflict to the end of the financial year.
- 3.17 The period saw significant volatility in gilt yields. The 10-year UK benchmark gilt yield started the year at 4.65% and ended at 4.86%. However, over this time the 10-year yield hit a low of 4.23% and a high of 4.95% in the space of a month. It was a similar picture for the 20-year gilt which started at 5.18% and ended at 5.45% with a low and high of 4.92% and 5.55% respectively. The Sterling Overnight Rate (SONIA) averaged 4.01% over the 12 months to 31st March.
- 3.18 **Credit review:** Arlingclose maintained its recommended maximum unsecured duration limit on most of the banks on its counterparty list at 6 months. The other banks remain on 100 days.
- 3.19 Earlier in the period, Fitch upgraded NatWest Group and related entities to AA- from A+ and placed Clydesdale Bank's long-term A- rating on Rating Watch Positive. Fitch later upgraded Clydesdale Bank and HSBC, but downgraded Lancashire CC and Close Brothers.
- 3.20 Moody's affirmed OP Corporate's rating at Aa3 In May 2025. Later in the period, Moody's upgraded Transport for London, Allied Irish Banks, Bank of Ireland, Toronto-Dominion Bank, DZ Bank, Nordea and HSBC and downgraded Close Brothers. In the last quarter of 2025 S&P upgraded Clydesdale Bank, Allied Irish Banks and Bank of Ireland, and assigned Warrington Council a BBB+ rating.
- 3.21 After spiking in April 2025 following the US trade tariff announcements, UK credit default swap (CDS) prices had trended down before picking up modestly in October and November. After declining again in December and into the new calendar year, they rose sharply once again when the war in the Middle East started. They were still elevated at the end of the period, but prices for all banks on Arlingclose's counterparty list remained within limits deemed satisfactory for maintaining credit advice at current durations.
- 3.22 Overall, European banks' CDS prices have generally been flatter and lower compared to the UK, as have Singaporean and Australian lenders while some Canadian bank CDS

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prices have remained elevated since the beginning of the period in part due to ongoing trade tensions with the US.

- 3.23 Financial market volatility is expected to remain, and CDS levels will be monitored for signs of ongoing credit stress. As ever, the institutions and durations on the Authority's counterparty list recommended by Arlingclose remain under constant review.

Local Context

- 3.24 On 31st March 2026, the Authority had net investing of £1.91m arising from its revenue and capital income and expenditure. The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while balance sheet resources are the underlying resources available for investment. These factors are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Balance Sheet Summary

	31.3.25	31.3.26
	Actual	Actual
	£m	£m
General Fund & Regeneration CFR	31.26	31.09
Total CFR	31.26	31.09
External borrowing**	0	-15.00
Internal borrowing	31.26	16.09
Less: Usable reserves	-11.27	-14.18
Less: Working capital	-3.10	-3.10
Net borrowing	16.89	-1.91

** shows only loans to which the Authority is committed and excludes optional refinancing

- 3.25 The treasury management position at 31st March and the change during the year is shown in Table 2 below.

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Table 2: Treasury Management Summary

	31.3.25 Balance £m	Movement £m	31.3.26 Balance £m	31.3.26 Rate %
Long-term borrowing				
- PWLB				
- LOBOs				
- Other				
Short-term borrowing	0	-15.00	-15.00	5.30%
Total borrowing	0	-15.00	-15.00	
Long-term investments				
Short-term investments	4.20	-4.20	0.00	5.00%
Cash and cash equivalents				
Total investments	4.20	-4.20	0.00	
Net borrowing	4.20	-19.20	-15.00	

Borrowing Strategy and Activity

- 3.26 As outlined in the treasury strategy, the Authority's chief objective when borrowing has been to strike an appropriate risk balance between securing lower interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required, with flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Authority's long-term plans change being a secondary objective. The Authority's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio.
- 3.27 Gilt yields slightly decreased over most of the period; reflecting expectations of lower interest rates, a tepid economy and to some extent an improvement in the UK governments fiscal position following tax rises in the autumn budget. Subsequent to the war in the Middle East however, gilt yields saw a rapid rise to above the yield at the beginning of the financial year.
- 3.28 The PWLB certainty rate for 10-year maturity loans was 5.38% at the beginning of the period and 5.72% at the end. The lowest available 10-year maturity certainty rate was 5.13% and the highest was 5.88%. Rates for 20-year maturity loans ranged from 5.71% to 6.37% during the period, and 50-year maturity loans from 5.46% to 6.24%. The cost of

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short-term borrowing from other local authorities has been similar to or a little above Base Rate for most of the period, with interest rates between 4.0% and 4.5%. However, as is commonly seen, rates rose higher towards the end of the financial year, with rates of 5.0% - 7.0% being seen.

3.29 CIPFA's 2021 Prudential Code is clear that local authorities must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return and that it is not prudent for local authorities to make any investment or spending decision that will increase the capital financing requirement and so may lead to new borrowing, unless directly and primarily related to the functions of the Authority. PWLB loans are no longer available to local authorities planning to buy investment assets primarily for yield unless these loans are for refinancing purposes. The Authority has no new plans to borrow to invest primarily for financial return.

3.30 **Loans Portfolio:** At 31st March the Authority held £15m of loans, as part of its strategy for funding previous and current years' capital programmes. Outstanding loans on 31st March 2026 are summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Borrowing Position

	31.3.25 Balance £m	Net Movement £m	31.3.26 Balance £m	31.3.26 Weighted Average Rate %	31.3.26 Weighted Average Maturity (years)
Public Works Loan Board		10.00	10.00	4.29	1
Banks (LOBO)					
Banks (fixed-term)					
Local authorities (long-term)					
Local authorities (short-term)	0	5.00	5.00	5.3%	0.25
Total borrowing	0	15.00	15.00		

Treasury Investment Activity

3.31 The CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes (revised in 2021) defines treasury management investments as investments that arise from the organisation's cash flows or treasury risk management activity that ultimately represents balances that need to be invested until the cash is required for use in the course of business.

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- 3.32 The Authority does not hold any invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. During the period, the Authority's investment balances ranged between £0.5 and £14.0 million due to timing differences between income and expenditure. The investment position is shown in table 4 below.

Table 4: Treasury Investment Position

	31.3.25	Net	31.3.26	31.3.26
	Balance	Movement	Balance	Weighted Average Maturity
	£'000	£'000	£'000	days
Banks & building societies (unsecured)				
Banks & building societies (secured deposits)				
Government	0.00	0.00	0.00	0
Local authorities and other govt entities				
Corporate bonds and loans				
Money Market Funds	4.20	-4.20	0.00	26
Total investments	4.20	-4.20	0.00	

- 3.33 Both the CIPFA Code and government guidance require the Authority to invest its funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its treasury investments before seeking the optimum rate of return, or yield. The Authority's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income.
- 3.34 As demonstrated by the liability benchmark in this report, the Authority expects to be a long-term investor and treasury investments therefore include both short-term low risk instruments to manage day-to-day cash flows and longer-term instruments where limited additional risk is accepted in return for higher investment income to support local public services.
- 3.35 Bank Rate reduced from 4.50% to 4.25% in May 2025, followed by a further reduction to 4.00% in August 2025 and to 3.75% in December 2025. Short term interest rates have largely followed these levels. The rates on DMADF deposits ranged between 3.9% and

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4.45% and money market rates between 3.4% and 4.2%.

Non-Treasury Investments

- 3.36 The definition of investments in the Treasury Management Code now covers all the financial assets of the Authority as well as other non-financial assets which the Authority holds primarily for financial return. Investments that do not meet the definition of treasury management investments (i.e. management of surplus cash) are categorised as either for service purposes (made explicitly to further service objectives) and or for commercial purposes (made primarily for financial return).
- 3.37 Investment Guidance issued by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and Welsh Government also includes within the definition of investments all such assets held partially or wholly for financial return.

Treasury Performance

- 3.38 The Authority measures the financial performance of its treasury management activities both in terms of its impact on the revenue budget and its relationship to benchmark interest rates, as shown in table 5 below.

Table 5: Performance

	Actual £m	Budget £m	Over/ under
<i>Government (incl. local authorities)</i>	15.00	10.00	-5.00
Total borrowing	15.00	10.00	-5.00
<i>Short-term Investments</i>	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total treasury borrowing	15.00	10.00	-5.00

MRP Regulations

- 3.39 On 10th April 2024 amended legislation and revised statutory guidance were published on Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The majority of the changes take effect from the 2025/26 financial year, although there is a requirement that for capital loans given on or

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after 7th May 2024 sufficient MRP must be charged so that the outstanding Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) in respect of the loan is no higher than the principal outstanding less the Expected Credit Loss (ECL) charge for that loan.

- 3.40 The regulations also require that local authorities cannot exclude any amount of their CFR from their MRP calculation unless by an exception set out in law. Capital receipts cannot be used to directly replace, in whole or part, the prudent charge to revenue for MRP (there are specific exceptions for capital loans and leased assets).

Compliance

- 3.41 The Director of Finance and Section 151 officer reports that all treasury management activities undertaken during the year complied fully with the principles in the Treasury Management Code and the Authority's approved Treasury Management Strategy. Compliance with specific investment limits is demonstrated in table 6 below.

Table 6: Investment Limits

	2025/26 Maximum	31.3.26 Actual	Complied? Yes/No
Any single organisation, except the UK Government	£4m each	£0m	Yes
UK Central Government	Unlimited	£0m	Yes
Unsecured investments with banks and building societies	£2.5m in total	£0m	Yes
Loans to unrated corporates	£1m in total	£0m	Yes
Money Market Funds	£20m in total	£0m	Yes
Foreign countries	£5m per country	£0m	Yes
Real Estate Investment Trusts	£2.5m in total	£0m	Yes

- 3.42 Compliance with the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for external debt is demonstrated in table 7 below.

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Table 7: Debt and the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary

	2025/26 Maximum	31.3.26 Actual	2025/26 Operational Boundary	2025/26 Authorised Limit	Complied? Yes/No
Borrowing	50.00	15.00	50.00	55.00	Yes
PFI and Finance Leases	1.50	0	1.50	1.50	Yes
Total debt	51.50	15.00	51.50	56.50	

- 3.43 Since the operational boundary is a management tool for in-year monitoring it is not significant if the operational boundary is breached on occasions due to variations in cash flow, and this is not counted as a compliance failure

Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

- 3.44 As required by the 2021 CIPFA Treasury Management Code, the Authority monitors and measures the following treasury management prudential indicators.

Liability Benchmark

- 3.45 This indicator compares the Authority's actual existing borrowing against a liability benchmark that has been calculated to show the lowest risk level of borrowing. The liability benchmark is an important tool to help establish whether the Council is likely to be a long-term borrower or long-term investor in the future, and so shape its strategic focus and decision making. It represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the Council must hold to fund its current capital and revenue plans while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level of £2m required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

	31.3.25 Actual	31.3.26 Actual	31.3.27 Forecast	31.3.28 Forecast
Loans CFR	31.26	31.09	36.26	37.71
Less: Usable Reserves	-11.27	-14.18	-10.42	-10.02
Less: Working Capital	-3.10	-3.10	-3.10	-3.10
Net loans requirement	16.89	13.81	22.74	24.59
Plus: Liquidity allowance	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.20
Liability benchmark	17.09	14.01	22.94	24.79
Existing borrowing	0	15.00	10.00	5.00

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- 3.46 Following on from the medium-term forecast above, the long-term liability benchmark assumes capital expenditure funded by borrowing of £11.10m, minimum revenue provision on new capital expenditure based on a 40 year asset life and income, expenditure and reserves all increasing by inflation of 2% p.a. This is shown in the chart below together with the maturity profile of the Authority's existing borrowing.

Maturity Structure of Borrowing

- 3.47 This indicator is set to control the Authority's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of all borrowing were:

	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	31.3.26 Actual	Complied?
Under 12 months	100%	0%	100%	Yes
12 months and within 24 months	100%	0%	0%	Yes
24 months and within 5 years	100%	0%	0%	Yes
5 years and within 10 years	100%	0%	0%	Yes
10 years and above	100%	0%	0%	Yes

- 3.48 Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. The maturity date of borrowing is the earliest date on which the lender can demand repayment.

Long-term Treasury Management Investments

- 3.49 The purpose of this indicator is to control the Authority's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The prudential limits on the long-term treasury management limits are:

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£1.0m	£0.5m	£0m
Actual principal invested beyond year end	0	0	0
Complied?	Yes	Yes	Yes

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- 3.50 Long-term investments with no fixed maturity date include strategic pooled funds, real estate investment trusts and directly held equity but exclude money market funds and bank accounts with no fixed maturity date as these are considered short-term.

Additional indicators

Security:

- 3.51 The Authority has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit rating of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc.) and taking the arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

	2025/26 Target	31.3.26 Actual	Complied?
Portfolio average credit rating	A	-	Yes

Liquidity:

- 3.52 The Authority has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to liquidity risk by monitoring the amount of cash available to meet unexpected payments within a rolling three-month period, without additional borrowing.

	2025/26 Target	31.3.26 Actual	Complied?
Total cash available within 3 months	£2.5m	£2.5m	Yes
Total sum borrowed in past 3 months without prior notice	Nil	Nil	Yes

Interest Rate Exposures:

- 3.53 This indicator is set to control the Authority's exposure to interest rate risk.

Interest rate risk indicator	2025/26 Target	31.3.26 Actual	Complied?
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>rise</u> in interest rates	500,000	0	Yes
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>fall</u> in interest rates	500,000	0	Yes

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3.54 For context, the changes in interest rates during the year were:

	1/4/25	31/3/26
Bank Rate	4.50%	3.75%
1-year PWLB certainty rate, maturity loans	4.82%	5.04%
5-year PWLB certainty rate, maturity loans	4.94%	5.28%
10-year PWLB certainty rate, maturity loans	5.38%	5.72%
20-year PWLB certainty rate, maturity loans	5.88%	6.23%
50-year PWLB certainty rate, maturity loans	5.63%	6.04%

3.55 The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investment will be replaced at new market rates.

4. IMPLICATIONS

Legal Implications

4.1 A number of statutes governing the provision of services covered by this report contain express powers or duties to charge for services. Where an express power to charge does not exist the Council has the power under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 to charge where the activity is incidental or conducive to or calculated to facilitate the Councils statutory function.

Service / Operational Implications

4.2 Monitoring is undertaken to ensure that income targets are achieved, with Treasury Management activities taking place on a daily basis.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

4.3 The only impact of treasury transactions is in respect of ethical investment linked to the Councils investment counterparties. Presently the Council has a limited counterparty list based on financial risk to the Authority.

Local Government Reorganisation

4.4 The level of debt and investments the Council holds will transfer over to the new unitary on vesting day.

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Relevant Council Priority

- 4.5 Financial resilience and good governance underpin the council's ability to meet all of its priorities.

Climate Change Implications

- 4.6 None directly as a result of this report.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 There is always significant risk in relation to treasury transactions, this is why Councils appoint Treasury advisors, which in the case of Bromsgrove is Arlingclose. In addition, there is the requirement in this area to provide an Annual Strategy report containing indicators/limits that must be met, a quarterly update and closure report all of which must be reported to full Council.

6. COMMUNITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no Community implications as a result of this report.

7. APPENDICES

None

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

MTFP 2025/26 – February 2025 which contains the years Capital Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy and MRP Policy.

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Financial Outturn Report 2025/26

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Simon Nock
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Debra Goodall
Report Authors	Assistant Director of Finance and Customer Services Debra.Goodall@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Wards Affected	All Wards
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	All
Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to set out the Council's Revenue and Capital Outturn position for the financial year April 2025 to March 2026. The Outturn Report is a management report that complements the quarterly financial monitoring reports, produced in a consistent format to aid review.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that:

- 2.1. The 2025/26 revenue outturn position is an overspend of £5,480 which will be funded by an allocation from General Fund Balance.
- 2.2. The General Fund Opening Balance of £13.382m will be reduced to £13.150m as a result of this overspend and the net transfer to Ward Budget Reserves previously agreed with members
- 2.3. The 2025/26 capital outturn position is £16.943m spend against a total approved programme of £21.877m. The net balance of £4.934m will be carried forward and included within the 2026/27 capital programme.
- 2.4. The Ward Budget allocation for 2025/26 of £62,000 had approved allocations at £55,402 as at 31 March 2026, resulting in £6,598 which is transferred to General Fund reserves.
- 2.5. The balance of Earmarked Reserves as at 31 March 2026 is £14.169m.
- 2.6. There is an updated procurement position set out in Appendix D, with any new items over £200k to be included on the forward plan.

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3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 This report sets out the draft financial outturn revenue and capital performance of the Council for 2025/26 against budget.
- 3.2 The £15.3m full year revenue budget included in the table below is the budget that was approved by Council in February 2025. The budgets were revised during the year to allow for efficiency and salary savings.
- 3.3 The Finance team have undertaken a detailed review of the 2025/26 accounts since year end including:
- Accruals and prepayments,
 - Grants are applied to known expenditure and remaining balances are carried forward,
 - Reserves are applied to known expenditure,
 - Shared service recharges between Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils where a shared service arrangement exists and
 - Transfers between the Collection Fund and the General Fund.

Revenue Position

- 3.4 The revenue outturn position is a £5,480 overspend as shown in Table 3 below. This shows a favourable net £308,203 movement since the position reported at Q3. The movement from Q3 to Outturn is summarised in Table 4 at paragraph 3.5. Two key, year-end amendments making up this movement were staff capitalisation and VAT adjustments; these are shown in tables 1 and 2 below.

A salary capitalisation exercise is completed at the end of year to identify staffing costs that should be correctly charged to the capital programme. In future years, an estimate of potential capitalisation will be built into projected spend as part of the quarterly monitoring. As at 31 March 2026, the Council recharged a proportion of time spent (salary) against the capital projects undertaken during the year (reducing revenue spend and increasing charges to the capital programme) as follows:

Table 1 – Staff Capitalisation

BDC services	Net amount
Business Transformation & Organisation Development	- 105,192.00
Community and Housing Services	- 47,288.00
Corporate Services	- 18,045.00
Environmental Services	- 196,855.00
Legal and Democratic Services	- 72,716.00

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Regeneration & Property Services	-
	309,580.00
Grand Total (reduced revenue expenditure)	-
	749,676.00

There was also an impact on the outturn position of VAT adjustments as a result the Error Correction Notices submitted over the year, and shown in the following table:

Table 2 – VAT Correction

BDC services	Net amount
Business Transformation and Organisational Development	- 8,189.95
Community and Housing GF Services	45,242.21
Corporate Services	60.50
Environmental Services	19,246.58
Worcester Regulatory Services	7,010.57
Regeneration & Property	167,842.48
Legal & Democratic services	10,359.86
Planning and Leisure Services	164,746.96
Grand total increased revenue expenditure	406,319.21

The subsequent Outturn position is as per Table 3 below:

Table 3 Overall Outturn Position

Service Description	2025-26 Approved Budget	2025-26 Revised Budget	2025-26 Actual Spend	Full Year Outturn Variance	Projected Variance at Q3	Change in variance
Business Transformation and Organisational Development	2,197,136	1,994,442	1,825,546	-168,896	(23,514)	(145,382)
Community and Housing GF Services	1,402,751	1,273,820	1,170,328	-103,492	285,783	(389,275)
Corporate Services	885,935	2,082,097	1,196,982	-885,115	(864,151)	(20,964)
Environmental Services	4,266,050	4,153,738	5,070,184	916,446	883,792	32,654
Financial and Customer Services	2,387,557	2,346,975	3,215,544	868,569	674,151	194,418
Legal, Democratic and Elections Services	1,178,898	1,160,541	1,074,565	-85,976	58,320	(144,296)
Planning and Leisure Services	1,250,320	1,009,686	1,195,708	186,022	(7,339)	193,361
Regeneration & Property	1,099,949	640,297	575,156	-65,141	176,832	(241,973)
Regulatory Client - Commissioning Role	646,139	653,139	707,142	54,002	99,359	(45,357)
Grand Total	15,314,735	15,314,735	16,031,155	716,420	1,283,233	(566,813)
Service Description	2025-26 Approved Budget	2025-26 Revised Budget	2025-26 Actual Spend	Full Year Projected Variance Q2	Projected Variance at Q3	Change in variance
Corporate Financing	(15,314,735)	(15,314,735)	(16,025,675)	-710,940	(969,550)	258,610
Grand Total	(15,314,735)	(15,314,735)	(16,025,675)	(710,940)	(969,550)	258,610
TOTALS	0	0	5,480	5,480	313,683	(308,203)

- 3.5 The overall variance of £5,480 results from an overspend of £716,420 against service spending, offset by an underspend of £710,940 from corporate financing due to additional grant funding and investment income received. Against a budget of £15.314m,

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the service overspend represents a variance of 4.68%. The service spending moved from Q3 £1.283m to £0.716m at year end, a positive movement of £0.567m mainly due to the net impacts of the capitalisation recharge (-£0.750m) and VAT correction (+£0.406m) noted above plus the allocation of grant funding at year end. A small increase in spend of £0.046m across all service areas between quarters has delivered what is, overall, an insignificant overspend of £5,480. The movement between Q3 and Outturn is summarised in the following table:

Table 4 Movement from Quarter 3 to Outturn

	Service Expenditure (£)	Corporate Financing (£)	Net position (£)
Position at Q3	1,283,233	-969,550	313,683
Capitalisation of salary costs (Q4)	-749,676	0	-749,676
Impact of VAT Error Correction Notice in year	406,319	0	406,319
Variances to Q3 projections at Q4 (see supplementary tables below)	46,544	-11,390	35,154
Allocation of grants from Corporate Financing to Services	-270,000	270,000	0
Position at Outturn	716,420	-710,940	5,480

- 3.6 The following paragraphs set out the year end variances for each service area against the 2025/26 revenue budget:

Business Transformation & Organisational Development – outturn position £169k underspend

Supplementary Table 3.6a

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Capitalisation (Table 1)	-105	Staffing charged to the capital programme as part of £0.75m adjustment at year end.
VAT Impact (Table 2)	-8	Minor VAT adjustments.
Training	-60	Training savings were realised this year. This is a one-off and will not be repeated in 2026/27
Street Naming and Numbering	-47	Additional income was raised from street naming and numbering. Street naming and numbering income is restricted by the number of new

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		properties developed in the area, so the total received each year varies.
Apprenticeship Budget	+61	Corporate contributions to the apprenticeship levy were over-committed in the year. There was a pressure bid put in 25/26 to increase the budget to avoid overspend in the 26/27 financial year.
Other Variances	-10	Other minor variances across the service
Outturn Position	-169	

Community and Housing Services - outturn position £103k underspend

Supplementary Table 3.6b

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Capitalisation (Table 1)	-47	Staffing charged to the capital programme as part of £0.75m adjustment at year end.
VAT Impact (Table 2)	+45	£17.2k relates to the social prescribing contract which PSTax have advised is VATable, £11.4k relates to Domestic Abuse Services, £7.9k relating to Static Temporary Accommodation and £6.1k Homelessness Services (all found to be contracts where VAT should be standard rated) and other minor adjustments.
CCTV Infrastructure	-72	Income from Wyre Forest District Council for CCTV has increased by £12k against the original budget of £42k. This is due to additional cameras being monitored. CCTV infrastructure is moving to more modern wireless transmission leading to increased costs. Transition from fibre to wireless will continue through to August 2026 resulting in a lower cost over that period. The 25/26 fibre cost was £20k below budget. Some of the planned upgrades have yet to be completed which will create a pressure in the 2026/27 budget that will need to be reviewed.

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CLG Homelessness	-71	The Communities and Local Government (CLG) Homelessness underspend of £71k is for the new MRI housing management system for housing register, homelessness and Choice Based Lettings. The supplier invoiced Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) rather than BDC and we are waiting for a revised invoice.
Climate Change	-23	The Climate Change budget of £37k has ongoing commitments of £14k for an annual contract. The resulting underspend of £23k will be reviewed as part of the 27/28 MTFP process.
Homelessness	+66	This is primarily due to rising demand associated with bed and breakfast accommodation. A Low-Cost Housing Capital Receipts Report is being considered as a separate item on this agenda. This seeks approval for all low-cost housing receipts to be used by the Council to increase the supply of temporary accommodation by purchasing suitable dwellings. This should reduce the cost of Bed and Breakfast in future years.
Other variances	-1	Other minor variances across the service
Outturn Position	-103	

Corporate Services – outturn position £885k underspend

Supplementary Table 3.6c

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Capitalisation (Table 1)	-18	Staffing charged to the capital programme as part of £0.75m adjustment at year end.
VAT Impact (Table 2)	0	Minor VAT adjustment rounds to zero.
Vacancy Management, Inflation and Utilities	-956	There are savings of £956k due to achievement on vacancy management, corporate efficiencies other savings in inflation and utility budgets across the

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		whole Council. These savings are one off.
Local Government Reorganisation	+22	Communication costs of £7k relating to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) which is a one off charge. Additional cost due to a Local Government Reorganisation appraisal report of £59k, which was partially offset by LGR grant income of £37k. Any LGR costs in future years will be met from the LGR reserve.
Postages	+21	There are £21k additional postage costs relating to the cost of this across the whole council and the cost of this has been reflected within the MTFP for 2026.
Other Variances	+46	There is an adverse variance relating to other costs of £46k.
Outturn Position	-885	

Environmental Services – outturn position £916k overspend

Supplementary Table 3.6d

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Capitalisation (Table 1)	-197	Staffing charged to the capital programme as part of £0.75m adjustment at year end.
VAT Impact (Table 2)	+19	VAT adjustment largely relating to the Place Team (£12.8k relating to annual grass cutting and abandoned vehicles contracts for which income was not treated as VATable) and £5.1k of taxable Trade Waste Operations and other minor adjustments.
Waste Management Fleet	+977	The majority of the service overspend is due to additional spend above budget on Waste Management of £977k (£574k fleet maintenance and £403k Vehicle Hire). Fleet maintenance costs have increased due to several factors, including an ageing fleet, rising material costs, and difficulties recruiting HGV mechanics. This has led to some maintenance being outsourced, alongside increased vehicle hire costs to cover vehicles off

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		the road for repair. A large-scale fleet replacement programme saw new refuse vehicles delivered in the winter 2025, together with recruitment into the HGV Mechanic roles and this has already delivered significant reductions in maintenance and hire costs. Q4 performance provides clear evidence that this approach is working, and this trend is expected to continue through 26/27. Un-budgeted hire costs are expected to reduce to a minimum in 26/27 as a result of the new fleet, with Commercial Waste the only area reliant on hire vehicles whilst waiting on delivery of additional vehicles approved in December 2025 as part of service expansion. Hire costs have been built into the MTFP for this from 2026/27 accordingly.
Staffing Costs	+508	A mixture of vacant posts long and short term sickness has created an underspend of £349k. This has been offset by agency costs of £597k and £260k of overtime. Recruitment activity has continued through the end of last financial year and into 2026/27 to fill all vacant posts, alongside active management of sickness absence in accordance with Council policies. Overtime is expected to reduce now that the workshop is fully staffed.
Commercial Waste disposal	-287	There was additional income of £456k generated on Commercial Services which were offset by additional Trade Waste disposal costs of £109k and fuel costs of £60k, for which a business case to formally expand the service and adjust budget lines for 2026/27 has now been approved. Whilst the service generated a positive income, it was impacted by higher staffing and vehicle maintenance/hire costs that have been accounted for in the over-spends summarised above and resulted in a small overspend on the Commercial service in 25/26, although

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		this was £10k less than forecast in the expansion report approved in December 2025. The service is forecast to generate an additional surplus of £159k in 26/27 after all operational costs have been accounted for – subject to world events and fluctuations in associated fuel costs.
Garden Waste	-118	The Garden Waste service achieved additional income of £118k from increased subscriber numbers. The bin replacement programme provided an opportunity to positively promote the service and encourage customers to confirm or take up subscriptions, resulting in stronger than expected growth. While this level of increase is unlikely to continue at the same rate in future years, the programme has helped strengthen the customer base.
North Worcestershire Water Management Group Land Drainage service	+64	Aside from Waste Management, there is a £64k pressure relating to the Wyre Forest Contract within the North Worcestershire Water Management Group Land Drainage service. This reflects a budget shortfall identified during the year, arising from differences between the budget provision set and the actual cost of delivering the contractual arrangement. The budget position will be reviewed as part of future budget setting to ensure it is aligned with the ongoing cost of the service.
Other Variances	-50	Other minor savings of £50k in total.
Outturn Position	916	

Financial & Customer Services - outturn position £869k overspend

Supplementary Table 3.6e

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Insurance Property Valuations	+50	An unbudgeted cost of £50k for Insurance Property valuations for the Insurance tender exercise for Bruton Knowles.

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Agency Costs	+431	There is a nationwide staffing shortage of qualified finance personnel and there was a net overspend of £431k on Agency staff to cover vacancies for which active recruitment campaigns for permanent staff had been unsuccessful. A review of the structure aims to recruit any interim posts on a permanent basis.
Housing Subsidy Loss	+382	The housing subsidy budget was re-aligned by £382k relating to changes in the level of Housing Subsidy collected within year.
VAT reconciliation exercise	+105	Additional costs of £105k on VAT support from PS Tax as part of the support for the completion of the VAT returns to HMRC.
	-99	A VAT receipt of £99k due to historical leisure services review and recalculation relating back several years represented a one-off windfall.
Outturn Position	869	

Legal, Democratic and Election Services – outturn position £86k underspend

Supplementary Table 3.6f

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Capitalisation (Table 1)	-73	Staffing charged to the capital programme as part of £0.75m adjustment at year end.
VAT Impact (Table 2)	+10	Minor VAT adjustments
External Legal Costs	+13	One-off cost of 13k for external advice training and software to ensure compliance with the Procurement Act 2023
Land Charges	+10	Land Charges search costs
Software Costs	+10	Additional spend on upgrading Modern.Gov software
Shared service adjustment	-56	Roles in the team relate directly to HRA and therefore charged in full to Redditch Borough Council but not currently reflected that way in the budget. This will be corrected as part of 2027/28 budget setting.
Outturn Position	-86	

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Planning and Leisure Services – outturn position £186k overspend

Supplementary Table 3.6g

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
VAT Impact (Table 2)	+165	VAT adjustment of which £123k relates to Development Management Planning Fees (Pre Application Planning Fees which are VATable), £32.7k relates to VATable Building Control fees and other minor adjustments.
Parks and Events	-30	There was £30k of additional income in Parks and Events coming from Allotments due to increased lettings.
Development Management	-59	There was over achieved income of £59k in Development Management. Development Management income is dependent on external factors which makes it difficult to forecast.
Building Control	+50	Building Control under achieved income by £50k. Building Control income is dependent on external factors which makes it difficult to forecast.
Agency Costs	+31	Agency costs of £31k covering vacancies that the service is struggling to fill due to the current job market, and Planning is an area which is difficult to fill all vacancies.
Other Variances	+29	Other minor variances across the service
Outturn Position	186	

Regeneration and Property Services – outturn position £65k underspend

Supplementary Table 3.6h

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Capitalisation (Table 1)	-310	Staffing charged to the capital programme as part of £0.75m adjustment at year end.
VAT Impact (Table 2)	+168	VAT adjustment of which £166.2k relates to Off Street Car Parking Income which is VATable but treated as non-VATable when imported into the TechnologyOne system.

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Town Centre - Revenue	-24	£24k savings from staffing due to a vacancy within the team,
Parkside Business Rates	-26	£26k savings on Business Rates as spend at Parkside was lower than budgeted. Will be reviewed in 2026/27 and for 2027/28 MTFP.
Parkside	-51	£51k other savings on Parkside, including underspend on maintenance, and increased income generated by room hire. The budget for income has been increased for 26/27 as additional maintenance works are to be carried out in 26/27
Multi-Storey Car Park	-27	£27k saving on budgeted costs for Multi-Storey Car Park. The Multi-storey Car Park is currently closed resulting in savings on Business Rates. Will be reviewed in 2026/27 and for 2027/28 MTFP.
Enforcement Income	-7	£7k additional Enforcement income due to an increase of income in the last quarter. Will be reviewed in 2026/27 and for 2027/28 MTFP.
Software	+17	£15k of additional costs relating to Computer Aided Design software. Will be reviewed in 2026/27 and for 2027/28 MTFP.
Car parking	+145	There were several overspending areas in the year including: maintenance of £29k, additional £47k costs associated with Permit and £11k staffing recharge from Wychavon for parking enforcement staffing. The Car Parking income budget was not revised in 2025/26 leading to an income shortfall of £58k. Together these issues delivered an overspend of £145k, some of them one-off, and a pressure bid of £82k has been drawn up for consideration in 2026/27.
Other Variances	+50	Other minor variances across the service
Outturn Position	-65	

Regulatory Client – outturn position £54k overspend

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Supplementary Table 3.6i

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
VAT Impact (Table 2)	+7	Minor VAT adjustments.
Management Costs	+36	Additional management costs of WRS amounting to £36k.
Licensing Income	+48	Loss of Licensing income of £48k as a result of lower than anticipated licencing volumes. This is a re-occurring year on year pattern and will be addressed in the 2027/28 budget setting process
Aqueduct Stables	-23	Underspend of £23k due to a credit relating to Aqueduct Stables
Other Variances	-14	Other variances split across areas
Outturn Position	54	

Corporate Financing – outturn position £711k underspend

Supplementary Table 3.6j

Key Variances	Variance (£'000)	Explanation
Grant Income	-163	Additional s31 grant income received to support genera expenditure
Investment Income	-191	Additional investment income of cash balances, above budget.
Interest payable	-281	Reduced borrowing costs compared to budget.
Grant income brought forwards	-200	Revenue Grants Received in 24/25 now recognised in 25/26.
Fees and Charges	+125	Underachievement of fees and charges. This needs to be reviewed during the MTFP process.
Other Variances	-1	Other minor variances across the service
Outturn Position	-711	

Capital Position

- 3.6 A capital programme for 2025/26 of £17.352m was approved by Council in February 2025.
- 3.7 Many of these schemes were already in partial delivery before the 2025/26 financial year. Net unspent budget was carried from 2024/25 to supplement the 2025/26 capital programme as shown in table 5 below.

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Table 5 Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2029/30

Year	Original Budget (£)	Carried Forward from previous year (£)	Revised Budget (£)
2024/5	6,376,987	14,890,949	21,267,936
2025/6	17,351,727	4,524,714	21,876,441
2026/7	3,222,841		
2027/8	2,469,459		
2028/9	2,310,531		
2029/30	2,373,749		

3.8 Included in this funding the Council have the following Grant Funded Schemes which were delivered in 2025/26:

- The two Levelling Up schemes – Windsor Street (formerly project titled as ‘Old Fire Station’) and Nailers’ Yard (formerly known as ‘Market Hall’) are funded via £14.5m of Levelling Up funding, UKSPF funding, £2.425m of monies held in trust by Birmingham City Council on behalf of the former Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) and up to £2.1m funded by the Council.
- For the Nailers Yard Scheme:
 - Construction is progressing on site. The revised completion date is end of September/beginning of October 2026 (previously 26th January 2026) due to culvert works and delays relating to S278 external works. The cost of the scheme has increased as a result of this.
 - GJS Dillon have received several enquiries for the commercial building. The Council is about to sign a lease for 1.5 floors of office space and is in advanced discussion with another tenant for the ground floor food and beverage unit. Both leases are expected to be signed by 1st September 2026. Bruton Knowles are instructed as property management agents for the commercial building. The operator of the Pavilion building will be Rubicon Leisure Ltd. The service level agreement has been drafted and is expected to be signed in August 2026.

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- For the Windsor Street Scheme:
 - Brownfield Solutions have completed phase one ground water monitoring on site. Phase two works commenced in June 2026 which involve barrier injection works to reduce the levels of PFAS and PFOS further. This will be completed by the end of September 2026 followed by 12 months of groundwater monitoring.
 - Cabinet agreed the delivery option for residential use on the site in November 2025 and their preferred option was to deliver the site in partnership with a Registered Social Landlord (RSL). The regeneration team undertook soft market testing with RSLs to gauge interest in the site.
 - Following soft market testing with five RSLs actively seeking to develop residential schemes in Bromsgrove, a report was presented to Cabinet including their feedback with recommendations on 17 June 2026. Following the Cabinet approval, next steps would be to progress an outline planning application for the Windsor Street site. This would include the procurement of a planning consultant to support the preparation, coordination and submission of the application, alongside the commissioning of any necessary surveys and technical reports. Progressing the application at this stage would help to establish the principle and scale of development, reduce planning risk and support the timely disposal of the site in line with the approved Cabinet resolution. A budget of up to £150,000 was approved to meet the costs of progressing the outline planning application
- Public Realm work is now fully completed, and the underspend is approximately £925k.

The final business case for GBS LEP funding was signed off by Birmingham City Council on 20th January 2026. The grant funding agreement for £2.425m is in place and a claim was submitted for Q1 funding in July 2026.

In December 2025, the Government announced that the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) would be extended by 6 months. No additional funding has been provided but the 2025/26 allocation of £917,878, made up of a mix of capital (£286,083) and revenue (£631,795), now needs to be spent by 30 September 2026. The funds are being spent in line with the approved UKSPF Investment Plan.

- 3.9 The outturn spend on capital as at 31 March 2026 was £16.943m against a revised capital budget of £21.876m. Details of spend and variances are provided in **Appendix A**. The net underspend of £4.934m will be carried forward to 2026/27. Within this figure certain schemes have overspent by £1.653m offsetting a larger underspend of £6.587m across remaining schemes. A review of the capital programme in 2026/27 will be completed to ensure the revised programme is fully funded.

Earmarked Reserves

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- 3.10 The level of earmarked reserves held by the Council at the beginning of the 2025/26 financial year was reported to Council in February 2025 as part of the 2025/26 – 2027/28 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This is shown at Appendix B and was £11.266m as at 31 March 2025 (and therefore as at 1 April 2025). This figure was adjusted in year for the actual 2024/25 Outturn position (which was only estimated based on Q3 monitoring information at the time of the MTFP). All reserves were thoroughly reviewed for their requirement in 2025/26 and additional reserves were set up for inflationary pressures such as utility increases. At the 31 March 2026 the net position has improved, and the Council currently holds £14.169m of Earmarked Reserves for the 2026/27 financial year. Details are provided in Appendix B.

General Fund Balance

- 3.11 The General Fund Balance brought forward as at 1 April 2025 was £13.382m and as at the 31 March 2026 was £13.150m to accommodate the reported overspend of £5,480 and movement of funds to a Wards Reserve as previously agreed. The General Fund Balance movement is shown in Table 6 below and in Appendix B.

Table 6 General Fund Balance

GENERAL FUND	£m
Opening Balance	13.382
Movement in Year	
Ward Budgets – three year allocation (2025/26-2027-28)	(0.234)
Ward Budgets Underspend 2025/26	0.007
Year End Outturn	(0.005)
Closing Balance	13.150

Financial Performance

- 3.12 Council Tax collection rate data for the financial year 2025/26 is set out in the following tables. Overall, collection at 97.95% was below 0.05% below target of 98.0% although collection continues after year-end impacting on future-year collection rates.

Nationally, Council Tax collection rates have fallen compared to 2024/25 and since their post pandemic high in 2022/23. In 2025/26, average collection rates nationally were 95.6% and for Shire Districts were 97%.

Figure 1 Council Tax Collection Rate (April to March 2025/26)

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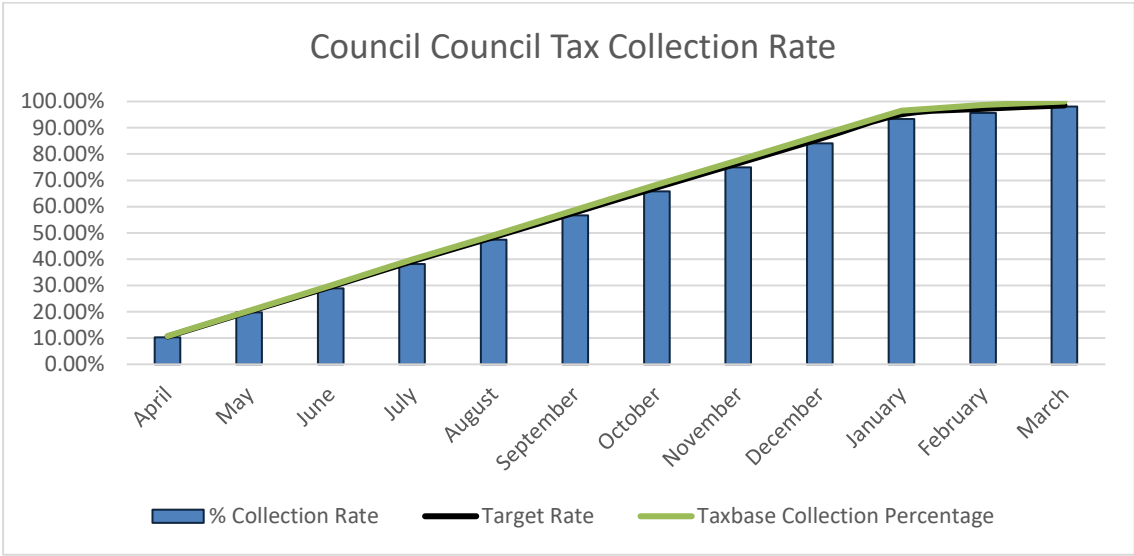


Figure 2 Monthly Council Tax Variance to target (April to March 2025/26)

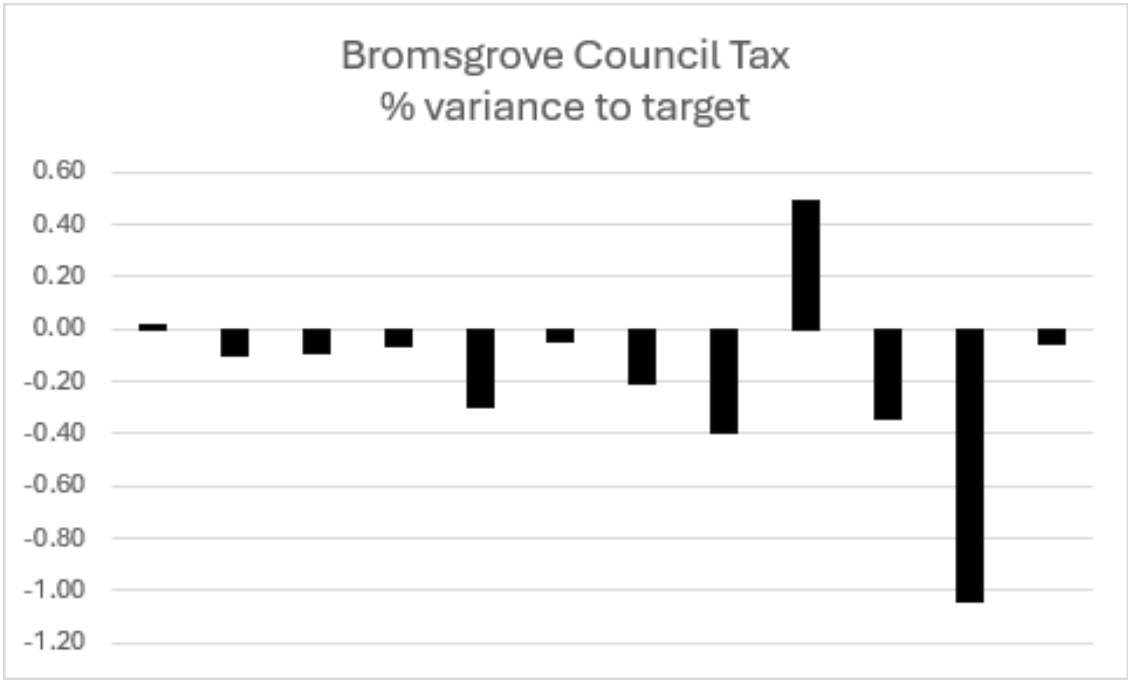
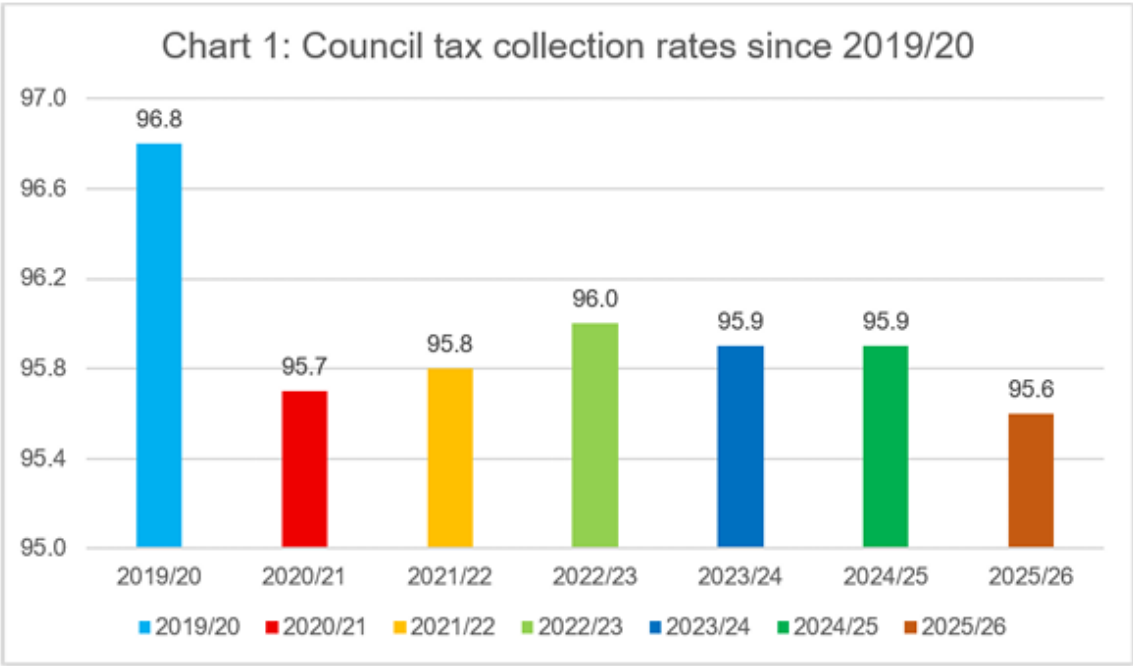


Figure 3 National Council Tax Collection Rates

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3.13 Non-Domestic Rates collection rate data for the financial year 2025/26 is set out in the following tables. Overall, collection at 97.5% was below 0.5% below target of 98.0% although collection continues after year-end impacting on future-year collection rates.

Nationally, Non-Domestic Rates collection rates have fallen compared to 2024/25, their post pandemic high. In 2025/26, average collection rates nationally were 96.8% and for Shire Districts were 97.3%.

Figure 4 Non-Domestic Rates Collection Rate (April to March 2025/26)

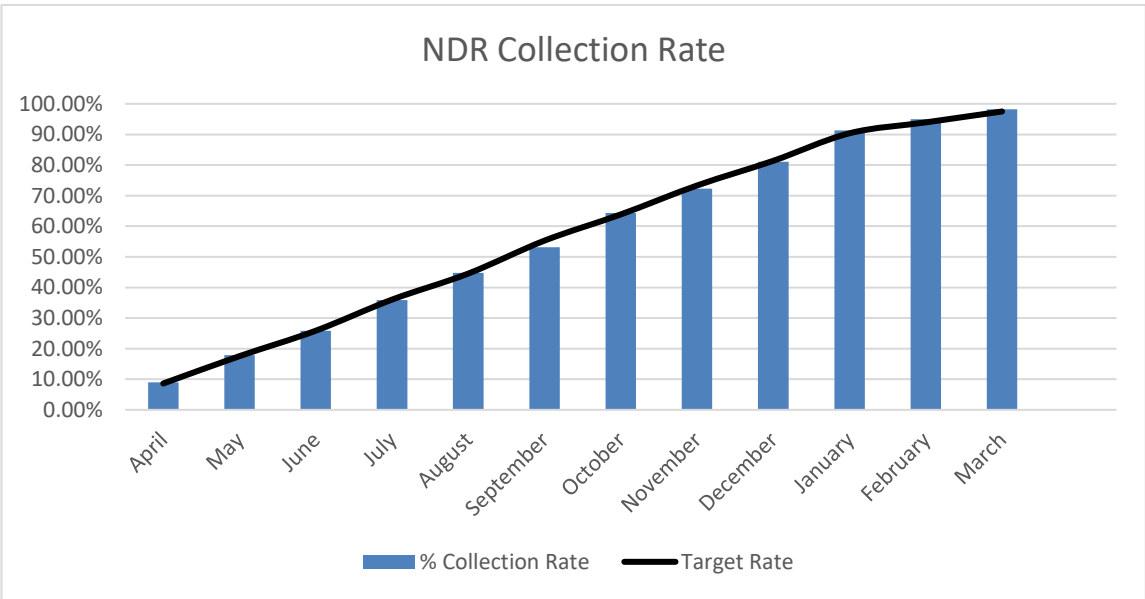


Figure 5 Monthly Non-Domestic Rates Variance to target (April to March 2025/26)

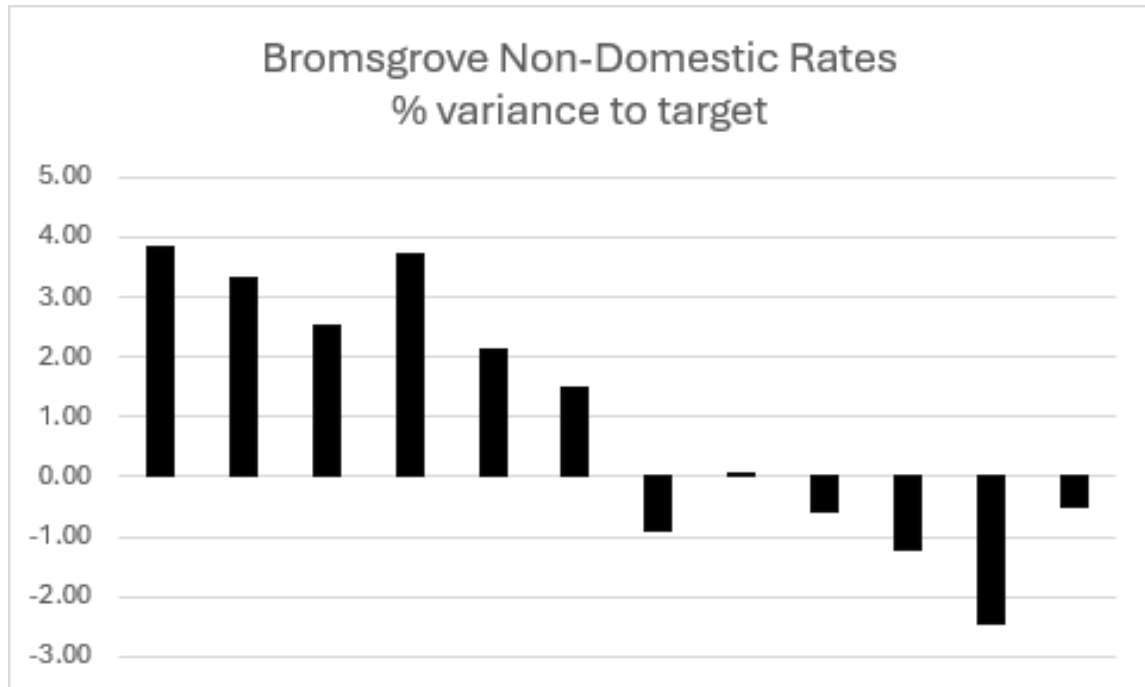
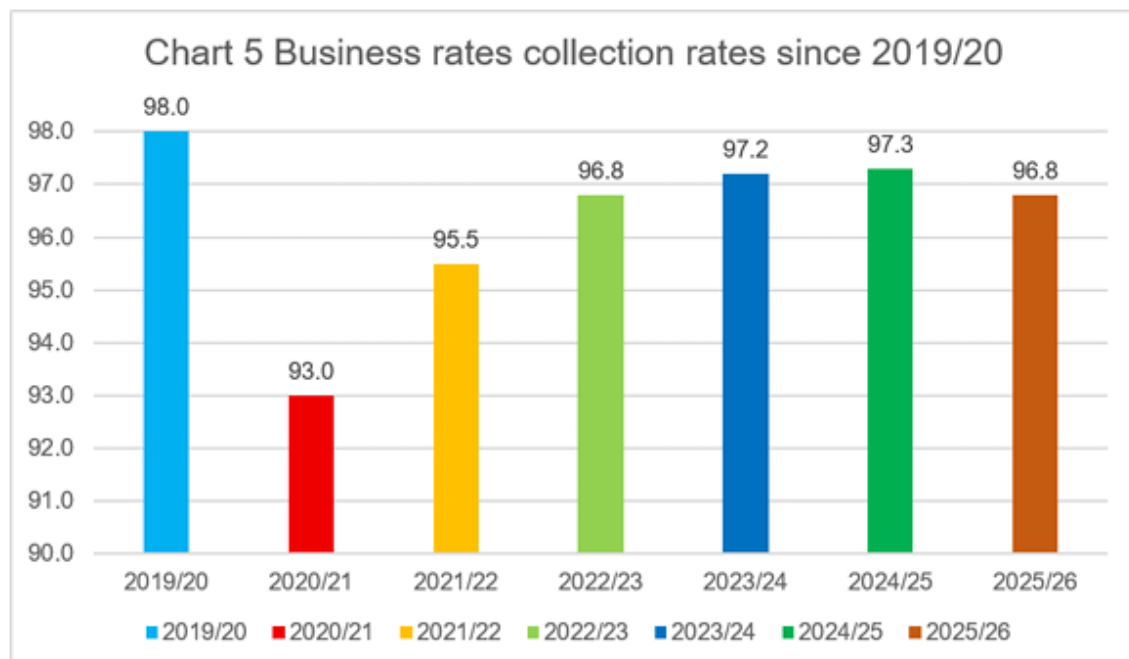


Figure 6 National Business Rates Collection Rates



4. Legal Implications

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- 4.1 No Legal implications have been identified.

5. Strategic Purpose Implications

Relevant Strategic Purpose

- 5.1 The Strategic purposes are included in the Council's corporate plan and guides the Council's approach to budget making ensuring we focus on the issues and what are most important for the borough and our communities. Financial monitoring and strategies are integrated within all Strategic Purposes.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.2 The green thread runs through the Council plan. The Financial monitoring report has implications on climate change, and these will be addressed and reviewed when relevant by climate change officers to ensure the correct procedures have been followed to ensure any impacts on climate change are fully understood.

Local Government Reorganisation

- 5.3 The end of year position will be taken into account in financial monitoring for the 2026/27 financial year, in budget setting for the 2027/28 financial year and a review of the Medium Term Financial Plan will take the Council through to Vesting Day on 1 April 2028. The level of debt and investments the Council holds will transfer over to the new unitary on vesting day.

6. Other Implications

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.1 None as a direct result of this report.

Operational Implications

- 6.2 Managers meet with finance officers to consider the current financial position and to ensure actions are in place to mitigate any overspends.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Items identified in the Financial Outturn report for 2025/26 link to several Corporate Risks as listed below. Many of the Council's Corporate Risks have an indirect link to the council's financial position. The mitigations to these risks are set out in the Risk Report, of which the Quarter 4 Report was reported to Audit, Standards and Governance Committee on 8 June 2026:

- COR002 - Financial Resilience of the Council and ability to manage financial shocks
- COR026 - Risk of Cash Flow Strain

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- 7.2 In future monitoring reports, financial risk will be reviewed with regular reporting against direct and indirect financial risk drivers.

8. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Capital Outturn
Appendix B – Reserves Position
Appendix C – Ward Budgets
Appendix D – Procurement Pipeline

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**Cabinet****22nd July 2026****Appendix A - 2025/26 Capital Outturn**

Capital Project	Description	2025/26 Total (Original) (£)	Carried Forward from 24/25 (£)	2025/26 Total (Incl C/F's) (£)	25/26 Spend (£)	Variance (£)
200072	Market Hall	9,228,000	2,327,322	11,555,322	10,041,973	1,513,349
200073	Ex-Fire Station/Windsor Street		-54,247	-54,247	130,822	-185,069
200082	CCTV Digital Upgrade (UKSPF)		33,668	33,668		33,668
200083	Centres Public Realm Improvement Programme (UKSPF)		0		18,833	-18,833
200084	Shop Frontage Improvement & Empty Shop Grants (UKSPF)		-53,605	-53,605		-53,605
200086	(UKSPF Funding BDC 2024/2025)	918,000	20,000	938,000		938,000
200006	Burcot Lane	0	-927,642	-927,642		-927,642
200008	Funding for DFGs	1,285,847	157,052	1,442,899	1,015,059	427,840
200009	Home Repairs	50,000	165,602	215,602	0	215,602
200010	Energy Efficiency Installation		212,190	212,190	0	212,190
200019	Fleet Replacement new line	1,265,000	1,908,318	3,173,318	2,278,305	895,013
200022	Replacement Parking Machines	100,000	-5,866	94,134	5,000	89,134
200026	Rubery Redevelopment Works		-1,504	-1,504		-1,504
200030	Wheelie Bin Purchase	120,000	-168,671	-48,671		-48,671
200033	Bus Shelters	18,000	16,345	34,345		34,345
200045	Greener Homes		-6,125	-6,125		-6,125
200069	Cisco Network Update	34,877	0	34,877		34,877
200070	Server Replacement	18,500	169,549	188,049	139,276	48,773
200071	Laptop Refresh	5,000	31,249	36,249	20,263	15,986
200075	Sanders Park		-103,763	-103,763	24,727	-128,490
200102	Fleet Replacement cost	15,000	9,400	24,400		24,400
200103	Wheelie Bin Increases		85,000	85,000		85,000
200076	Play Area, POS and Sport improvements at		30,582	30,582		30,582
200079	Footpaths	75,000	-42,980	32,020	75,811	-43,791
200104	Buildings	100,000	162,426	262,426	2,945	259,481
200105	Initial Play Audit Requirements		451,000	451,000		451,000
	Updated Play Audit Requirements (Dec 24)	166,242	0	166,242		166,242
200106	New ongoing Cyber security budget	25,000	25,000	50,000		50,000
200107	Artrix - Landlord Obligations	20,000	2,414	22,414		22,414
	Wild Flower Machinery		62,000	62,000		62,000
	Food Waste Collection - fund for Vehicles and	902,511	0	902,511		902,511
	Replacement Wheeled Bins	2,200,000	0	2,200,000	2,439,611	-239,611
	Parkside - Requirement for a firewall	9,750	0	9,750		9,750
	Laptops for new Starters	25,000	0	25,000		25,000
	Salary Capitalisation	750,000	0	750,000	750,000	0
200016	New Finance Enterprise system	20,000	20,000	40,000		40,000
	Grand Totals	17,351,727	4,524,714	21,876,441	16,942,625	4,933,816

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Appendix B - Earmarked Reserves

	Balance at 31/3/25	Transfers in 2025/26	Transfers out 2025/26	Balance at 31/3/26	Transfers in 2026/27	Transfers out 2026/27	Balance at 31/3/27	Transfers in 2027/28	Transfers out 2027/28	Balance at 31/3/28
General Fund Reserve	13,382	7	(239)	13,150		(34)	13,109			13,109
General Fund Earmarked Reserves:										
Artrix Holding Trust	29	10		39			39			39
Building Control Other	7		(7)	0			0			0
Building Control Partnerships	82			82			82			82
Building Levy	0			0	112		112			112
Community Services - CAB	181		(57)	124			124			124
Community Services - Climate Change	196			196			196			196
Council Tax Hardship Fund	79	79		158			158			158
Covid-19 (Collection Fund)	1,604		(1,604)	0			0			0
Covid-19 (General Covid Grant)	766		(766)	0			0			0
DCLG Homeless Grant	267			267			267			267
Disabled Facilities Grant	30			30			30			30
DWP Grant (Benefits)	128			128			128			128
Economic Growth Development	911			911			911			911
Election Services	85			85			85			85
ELF funding	138			138			138			138
Environmental Vehicles	27			27			27			27
EPR Funding Allocation	0	2,577		2,577			2,577			2,577
ERP Systems	116			116			116			116
Finance Contingency	330			330			330			330
Finance Revenues Reserve	0			0			0			0
Financial Services - Business Rate Retention	3,640		(2,640)	1,000			1,000			1,000
Housing Schemes	455		(455)	0			0			0
Housing Welfare Reform	112			112			112			112
ICT Refresh Reserve	81			81			81			81
Innovation	0	60		60			60			60
Leisure/Community Safety	115			115			115			115
Local Neighbourhood Partnerships	16			16			16			16
Local Plan Enquiry	487	83		570			570			570
Replacement Reserve (Inc. Recycling)	0			0			0			0
Localising Council Tax	107			107			107			107
Utilities Reserve	0			0			0			0
Regeneration Reserve	0			0			0			0
Other	81		(81)	0			0			0
Pension Reserve	200			200			200			200
Planning & Regeneration	599		(84)	535			535			535
Regeneration & Property	0	124		124			124			124
Regulatory Services (Partner Share)	86	4		90			90			90
Rubery Local Fund	0	100		100			100			100
Shared Services (Severance Costs)	311		(311)	0			0			0
Shopmobility Donations	0	1		1			1			1
Social Prescribing	0	57		57			57			57
Ukrainian Support	0	785		785			785			785
Ward Budget Initiative	0	234	(78)	156		(78)	78			78
New Reserves - MTFP 2026										
Risk and Resilience Reserve	0	2,500		2,500			2,500			2,500
LGR Reserve	0	1,000		1,000			1,000			1,000
Community Investment Fund	0	1,250		1,250			1,250			1,250
Particulate Monitoring	0	102		102			102			102
Total General Fund	11,266	8,966	(6,063)	14,169	112	(78)	14,203	0	0	14,203

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Appendix C - Ward Budgets

Activity	Spend	Balance
Cllr Alan Bailes	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Ruth Lambert	1,978.80	21.20
Cllr Sam Ammar	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Ester Gray	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Peter McDonald	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Harrison Rone-Clarke	1,500.00	500.00
Cllr Anita Dale	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Webb	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Hunter	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Rachel Bailes	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Sue Baxter	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr J Clarke	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Stephen Colella	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr J Elledge	1,840.00	160.00
Cllr Derek Forsythe	500.00	1,500.00
Cllr D Hopkins	683.00	1,317.00
Cllr Charlie Hotham	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Helen Jones	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr B Kumar	1,900.00	100.00
Cllr M Marshall	2,000.00	0.00

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Cllr Karen May	1,999.73	0.27
Cllr Bernard McEldowney	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr D Nicholl	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Simon Nock	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr S Peters	500.00	1,500.00
Cllr J Robinson	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr S Robinson	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr J Stanley	500.00	1,500.00
Cllr Kit Taylor	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr Peter Whittaker	2,000.00	0.00
Cllr S Evans	2,000.00	0.00
GRAND TOTAL	55,401.53	6,598.47

The Wards budget was approved by Council for three years from 2025/26 (£2,000 per ward (£62,000) in total) plus £16,000 per annum administration costs = £78,000 per year and therefore £234,000 to 2027/28). Total costs charged to the Wards Reserve for 2025/26 are £78,000 incorporating the £55,401.53 spend in the table above, the £6,598.47 underspend returned to General Fund Balance and £16,000 cost of Administration.

Appendix D - Procurement Pipeline

Title	Council	Contract Description	Department	Value	Current Contract Expiry Date	Procurement Start Date	Contract Start Date	Contract Length (years)	Extension	Planned Procurement Route
Microsoft Licensing	Bromsgrove	Microsoft Licensing for Azure, Windows and Office365 etc.	Business Transformation	438,000		13/02/2026	01/07/2026	3	N/A	A Framework
Sanders Park, Bromsgrove	Bromsgrove	To appoint a tenant for the catering and management of the Cafe in Sanders Park.	Leisure	321,000		23/03/2026	01/08/2026	10years 2months	No	A Tender

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Equality Strategy 2026-2030 (inc. Engagement Policy)

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Karen May (Leader)
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Hannah Corredor
Report Author	Job Title: Performance & Improvement Manager Contact email: h.mole@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 881685
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Council Priority	High-Quality Services
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND that: -

The Equality Strategy 2026 – 2030 (including the Engagement Policy 2026 - 2030) be approved.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council previously operated under an Equality Strategy covering the period 2022-2026 and an Engagement Strategy from 2022 to 2025. These strategies have helped embed equality considerations across service delivery, decision-making, engagement and workforce practices. As those strategies have now reached the end of their intended timeframe, an updated Equality Strategy, which includes the Engagement Policy as an appendix, have been developed for 2026-2028.
- 2.2 Progress and achievements from the previous strategies will be reported through the Councils' annual reporting arrangements alongside future updates on delivery of the new strategy.
- 2.3 The Equality Strategy is supported by an Action Plan, which brings together activity taking place across Council services to deliver the authority's equality objectives. The Action Plan enables more consistent monitoring of progress under each objective and enables the Council to demonstrate to residents how equality considerations are being embedded within the authority's work.
- 2.4 The refreshed Engagement Policy is included as an appendix to the Equality Strategy, demonstrating how effective equality work depends on high-quality insight and an understanding of the needs and experiences of different communities. It sets out how the Council will undertake

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inclusive and meaningful engagement so that the insight gathered from residents, community groups, partners, and staff can inform Equality Impact Assessments, service improvement activity and wider decision-making.

3. OPERATIONAL DETAIL

- 3.1 Both documents build on the Councils' existing equality and engagement work and reflect learning from residents, community groups, partners, and staff over the four-year period of the last strategy. They provide an updated framework for ensuring equality, accessibility and community insight from approval until unitarisation in 2028.
- 3.2 The strategy sets out four equality objectives for 2026-2028:
 - Continue to deliver fair and accessible services.
 - Strengthen inclusive engagement and communication.
 - Improve understanding of communities and support inclusion.
 - Support an inclusive and representative workforce.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications. However, where future actions arising from the Equality Action Plan or engagement activity require additional resources, these will need to be considered through the relevant service planning, budget setting or decision-making process.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Equality Strategy supports the Council in meeting the authority's responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Duty requires local authorities to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups.5.2 Approval of these documents will provide a clear framework for demonstrating that equality, accessibility and community engagement are embedded within policy development, service delivery and decision-making across the Council.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 Both documents recognise the importance of maintaining a consistent approach to equality, accessibility and community engagement during the upcoming transition through Local Government Reorganisation into a North Worcestershire unitary council.

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Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 The Equality Strategy and Engagement Policy contribute to the delivery of high-quality services.
- 6.3 Together, they help ensure services are informed by the needs and experiences of residents, support continuous improvement and promote fair, effective, and inclusive service delivery across the Council.

6.4 **Community Impact**

Will have a positive impact on communities by helping the Council better understand local needs, support inclusion and ensure services and decisions are informed by the views and experiences of residents. This contributes to community wellbeing and cohesion across the district.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.5. There are no direct climate change implications arising from the approval of the Equality Strategy and Engagement Policy. The documents do not commit the Council to any specific projects, developments or operational activities that would directly affect greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption or climate adaptation measures.
- 6.6. However, the principles set out within the Equality Strategy and Engagement Policy support inclusive decision-making and engagement, which can help ensure that the impacts of climate change and environmental changes on different communities are better understood. This is particularly relevant for groups who may be disproportionately affected by extreme weather, fuel poverty, poor housing conditions or other climate-related risks.
- 6.7. Future actions, policies or projects developed under the framework of these documents will continue to be considered on their individual merits and, where appropriate, will be subject to separate assessment of climate change implications.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.8 The subject matter of this report is directly concerned with equality, diversity and inclusion.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 Without an up-to-date Equality Strategy and Engagement Policy, there is a risk that the Council cannot clearly demonstrate how equality and engagement considerations are embedded. This could increase the risk of inconsistent practice across services and reduce assurance that the Council is meeting its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.

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- 7.2 The approved documents will help mitigate these risks by providing a clear and consistent framework for considering equality impacts, engaging with residents and communities and supporting informed decision-making. The Action Plan will also support the delivery and monitoring of identified priorities over the life of the Strategy.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A - Equality Strategy 2026-2028
Appendix 1 - Engagement Policy 2026-2028

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Karen May (Leader)	July 2026
Lead Director / Assistant Director	Hannah Corredor	12/08/26
Financial Services	Paul Earley	04/08/26
Legal Services	Claire Felton	03/08/26
Community Services	Bev Houghton	07/08/26
Policy Team (if equalities implications apply)	Emily Payne Engagement & Equalities Advisor Helen Mole Business Improvement Manager	N/A as authors
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	Matt Eccles, Climate Change Officer	03/03/26

Bromsgrove District Council Equality Strategy 2026-2030

Title	Bromsgrove District Council Equality Strategy 2026-2030
Description	This Strategy sets out our commitment for progressing equality over the next two years.
Created by	Engagement and Equalities Advisor
Date created	May 2026
Maintained by	Engagement and Equalities Advisor
Next Review Date	April 2030

Version number	Modified by	Modifications made	Date modified	Status

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us and we will do our best to help.

Email: equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Phone: 01527 548284

Foreword

Bromsgrove is a district with strong communities, valued local traditions and a growing diversity of experiences and perspectives. As a Council, we want everyone to feel respected, included and able to access the opportunities, services and support they need to thrive.

This Equality Strategy sets out how Bromsgrove District Council will continue to promote fairness, dignity and inclusion between 2026 and 2030. It builds on the progress we have already made and reflects what we have learned through engagement with residents, community groups, partners and staff.

The strategy recognises that equality is not a separate area of work. It is an important part of how we develop services, make decisions, engage with our communities and support our workforce. By considering different experiences and understanding the barriers people may face, we can make better decisions and deliver services that are more responsive to local needs.

While Bromsgrove is often seen as a prosperous district, we know that not everyone experiences the same opportunities or outcomes. This strategy reaffirms our commitment to understanding those differences and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate in community life and access Council services fairly.

As Bromsgrove prepares for significant change through Local Government Reorganisation, maintaining a focus on fairness, inclusion and understanding the needs of our communities will be more important than ever. This strategy provides a practical framework to help ensure those principles continue to guide our work in the years ahead.

I am pleased to support this Equality Strategy and look forward to working with residents, community organisations, businesses and partners to help deliver its objectives.

Councillor Karen May
Leader of Bromsgrove District Council

1. Purpose

At Bromsgrove District Council, we want everyone to be treated with fairness, dignity and respect. This Equality Strategy sets out how we will continue to do that between 2026 and 2030.

In recent years, we have listened to residents, community groups and staff to better understand people's experiences and the barriers they may face. This learning has helped shape how we deliver services, make decisions and support our workforce. While we are proud of the progress made, we recognise there is more to do.

This strategy builds on that learning and sets a clear direction for continuing to embed equality in our everyday work. Our aim is to support a district where people from all backgrounds can live, work and participate fully, and where individuals and communities feel valued and included.

The strategy will also support the Council during a period of organisational change. By maintaining a clear focus on equality, we can better understand how decisions may affect different people and communities, helping to ensure services remain fair, accessible and responsive to local needs throughout the transition to new local government arrangements.

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2. Scope

This strategy applies to everyone who lives in, works in or visits Bromsgrove District. It covers all Council services and functions, our workforce and Elected Members.

It reflects the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 and supports a consistent approach to equality across all areas of Council activity, including during any organisational change.

3. Our Legal Duties and Responsibilities

The Equality Act 2010 provides the legal framework that underpins our work on equality. It protects people from discrimination based on nine protected characteristics and places a duty on public bodies to think about equality as part of everything they do.

The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty. This means we must:

- eliminate discrimination and harassment
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between different groups

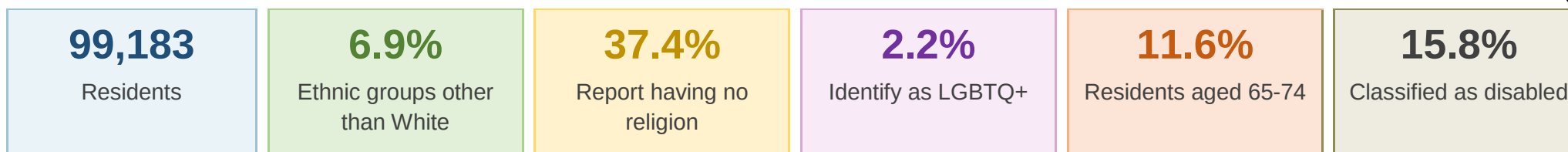
These duties reflect the way we already strive to work – by listening, learning and improving. Publishing this strategy helps us meet our legal responsibilities, but more importantly it sets out our commitment to creating a fairer, more inclusive district.

We also recognise that poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage can significantly affect people’s life chances. While not a protected characteristic in law, this remains an important consideration in how we understand inequality locally.

4. Understanding Bromsgrove District

Bromsgrove District is a place where town and countryside come together, combining Bromsgrove town, larger settlements such as Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Catshill, Hagley, Rubery and Wythall, and more than 40 parishes and villages, each with its own identity and strong sense of community. Home to around 99,200 residents, the district grew by 5.9% between 2011 and 2021 and has an older population than the national average, with a median age of 45. While the population remains predominantly White, Bromsgrove continues to become more diverse over time, with residents from a range of ethnic backgrounds, faiths, cultures and life experiences contributing to the character and identity of the district.

Understanding who lives in Bromsgrove and how the population is changing helps us recognise where barriers and inequalities may exist. Factors such as age, disability, caring responsibilities, ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation and wider socio-economic circumstances can all influence people's experiences, opportunities and access to services. This evidence provides an important foundation for delivering fair, inclusive and accessible services and for shaping the priorities of the Equality Strategy.



Age and life stage

Bromsgrove District has an older population than the national average, with a median age of 45 compared with 40 across England. Residents aged 65 to 74 account for 11.6% of the population, and the number of older residents continues to grow. This demographic change highlights the importance of accessible services, digital inclusion, prevention, health and wellbeing, and opportunities for people to remain active and connected throughout later life.

Disability, health and caring

Around 15.8% of residents report that a disability or long-term health condition limits their day-to-day activities, while more than 85% describe their health as good or very good. The district is also home to thousands of unpaid carers who provide support to family members, friends and neighbours, often balancing caring responsibilities alongside work, education and other aspects of daily life.

Socio-economic inequality

Bromsgrove is generally a prosperous district, with high levels of employment and home ownership. However, around 45% of households experience at least one dimension of deprivation, and some communities experience greater challenges relating to income, health, housing and access to services. Local evidence identifies parts of Charford, Sidemoor and North Bromsgrove as facing higher levels of deprivation than the district average.

Ethnicity and culture

The district is predominantly White, with 6.9% of residents identifying with ethnic groups other than White. While less diverse than many neighbouring authorities, Bromsgrove is becoming gradually more diverse over time. Residents come from a range of ethnic backgrounds, cultures and nationalities, contributing to vibrant communities and bringing a variety of experiences and perspectives that enrich life across the district.

Faith, belief and identity

Christianity remains the largest faith group, with around 53.5% of residents identifying as Christian, while 37.4% report having no religion. Alongside this are smaller but important faith communities, including Sikh, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Jewish residents. This diversity of faith, belief and worldview contributes to the identity and community life of the district.

Sexual orientation

Around 2.2% of residents aged 16 and over identify as LGBTQ+, while a larger proportion preferred not to state their sexual orientation. LGBTQ+ residents are an important part of Bromsgrove District's communities, and people's experiences may be shaped by factors including sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability and other aspects of identity. Creating inclusive and welcoming services helps ensure everyone can participate fully in community life.

Source: ONS Census 2021 dataset via Nomis

Bromsgrove benefits from strong communities, active voluntary and community organisations, and a high-quality natural environment. However, people's experiences and opportunities are not always the same. The evidence highlights the importance of understanding the different needs, strengths and lived experiences of residents across the district, including those who may face additional barriers or disadvantage.

By using this information to inform decision-making, service planning and engagement, the Council can help ensure services remain fair, accessible and responsive to local needs, while supporting equality of opportunity and positive outcomes for all residents.

5. Equality in Practice: What We Have Learned

Between 2022 and 2026, equality has increasingly informed how our services are designed, how investment decisions are made and how we engage with communities. Equality considerations have shaped real activity across housing, regeneration, environmental services, health, community safety and support during the cost-of-living crisis.

As a service provider, we have used community insight, feedback and lived experience to reduce barriers and improve access. As an employer, we have continued to strengthen an inclusive workplace culture, supported by fair recruitment practices, staff learning and reasonable adjustments.

5.1 Economic Development

The Council played a central role in regenerating key sites and improving housing access. This includes leading the redevelopment of the former Council House site at Burcot Lane, delivering 61 new low-carbon homes with 18 affordable units, and enabling major investments such as the £14 million housing development in Hagley. Regeneration projects and consultations, such as the Market Hall redevelopment and Local Plan engagement, ensured residents had an influential voice in shaping future development and housing provision.

5.2 Communities Which Are Safe, Well Maintained & Green

Through investment in parks and community spaces, the Council has supported wellbeing, social connection and a sense of belonging.

Improvements at Brook Road Park, alongside planned enhancements to Sanders Park Café and its car park, will improve accessibility and create more inclusive community facilities. These improvements will help ensure that people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities can access and enjoy these spaces, while encouraging greater social interaction and community participation. The Council has also supported cultural inclusion through plans for a new Fringe Festival and continued funding for community-led environmental projects through its small grants funding programme.

Equality is strengthened when neighbourhoods are safe, accessible and well maintained. The Council invested in new refuse vehicles, district-wide bin upgrades and street-cleaning machinery to improve the cleanliness and reliability of services used by all households. Environmental enforcement, including action against fly-tipping and illegal vape sales, protected vulnerable residents and helped maintain safe local environments. Community safety consultations further embedded inclusive engagement in setting local priorities.

5.3 Living Independent, Active & Healthy Lives

The Council supported opportunities for all residents to lead healthier lives, including free Couch to 5K programmes that encouraged accessible physical activity. Community events such as annual Christmas lights switch-ons promoted social cohesion and inclusion. The new energy-efficient homes at Burcot Lane also advanced equality by reducing energy bills and improving living conditions for residents at risk of fuel poverty.

5.4 Cost of Living Support & Financial Resilience

The Government's Household Support Fund (HSF), which operated until March 2026, provided targeted assistance to residents experiencing financial hardship. Working with Citizens Advice Bromsgrove and Redditch and local voluntary and community organisations, the Council helped distribute more than £189,000 of support during the final phase of the programme, including over £103,000 through local community organisations and £84,000 in direct payments to eligible households. The delivery of HSF highlighted the value of partnership working and targeted support in reaching residents most affected by the rising cost of living.

Although HSF has now ended, the Council continues to work with Worcestershire County Council and local partners to help residents access support through the new Crisis and Resilience Fund and other available assistance programmes.

5.5 Leadership, Participation and Investment

The Council demonstrated its commitment to equality through inclusive engagement and opportunities for participation. This included delivering interactive democracy sessions for students from Chadsgrove School and Specialist Sports College, helping young people with additional needs to engage with local democracy and understand decision-making processes. The Council also worked with local voluntary and community organisations to support residents facing disadvantage and to strengthen community involvement across the district. The establishment of Spadesbourne Homes Ltd created an opportunity for income generated from Council-owned housing to be reinvested into local services and priorities, supporting long-term benefits for Bromsgrove communities.

5.6 Voluntary, Community & Partnership Support

The Council continued to deliver its long-running Equality Small Grants Scheme, supporting small voluntary and community groups working with older people, disabled residents, LGBTQ+ communities, women, families, ethnic minority groups and others experiencing inequality. Over the years, the scheme has provided over £99,000 in funding to more than 90 groups, ensuring sustained investment in grassroots equality projects that directly benefit the district's diverse communities.

5.7 Workforce Development and Organisational Culture

The Council continues to promote a working environment based on fairness, dignity and respect. Learning and leadership activity, including Dignity at Work training, supports a culture where equality is part of everyday practice and service delivery. Further detail on the Council's approach as an employer is set out in section 8.

5.8 Impact and Learning

Taken together, this work shows how the Council has continued to embed equality, inclusion and fairness into everyday practice. The activity delivered between 2022 and 2026 reflects learning from previous strategies, engagement with communities and staff, and a growing understanding of how people access services and opportunities in different ways.

This work demonstrates how equality considerations are increasingly part of how the Council plans, delivers services and works with partners. The learning from this period provides a strong foundation for the Equality Objectives set out below and will continue to inform how the Council develops its approach in a practical and proportionate way.

6. Equality During Change

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Bromsgrove District is entering a period of significant change as preparations continue for the transition to a new unitary authority in North Worcestershire from April 2028. Throughout this period, equality will remain an important consideration in how services are planned, reviewed and delivered. Understanding how different people and communities experience change will help ensure decisions are informed by local evidence, community insight and an awareness of potential barriers.

We recognise that change can affect people in different ways. Factors such as age, disability, caring responsibilities, income, language, rurality and digital access can influence how residents access services, information and opportunities to participate in decision-making. Considering equality impacts at an early stage helps us better understand these differences and supports fair, accessible and inclusive outcomes.

We will continue to work with residents, community organisations, partners and staff to understand lived experiences and identify emerging issues as plans develop. This will help ensure that the diverse needs of Bromsgrove's communities remain visible throughout the transition and that local insight continues to inform decision-making.

Equality will also remain an important consideration for our workforce. As organisational arrangements evolve, we will continue to support staff through fair processes, clear communication and access to appropriate wellbeing, learning and development opportunities.

The Council will continue to make appropriate use of digital technology to support service delivery and decision-making. Where digital tools are used, they will be applied in a proportionate and transparent way, with appropriate safeguards, human oversight and consideration of accessibility and inclusion.

7. Equality in Service Delivery

The Council aims to deliver services that are fair, clear, and accessible. This means taking a thoughtful and proportionate approach to equality when services are designed, reviewed, and delivered.

7.1 Thinking about Equality in Decisions

The Council has an established Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process to help ensure equality considerations are taken into account when developing policies, reviewing services and making decisions. Equality Impact Assessments help the Council understand how proposals may affect different people and communities, identify potential barriers and consider opportunities to promote equality, inclusion and accessibility.

Equality Impact Assessments form part of the Council's decision-making framework and are completed for key decisions taken by Cabinet and Council, as well as for other proposals where there may be a significant impact on residents, communities or employees. The level of assessment undertaken will be proportionate to the scale, nature and potential impact of the proposal being considered.

The Council provides equality guidance, supporting templates and access to advice to help officers consider equality impacts in a practical and proportionate way. Rather than taking a rigid, one-size-fits-all approach, officers are expected to be able to explain how equality has been considered, drawing on available evidence, engagement findings, local knowledge and professional judgement where appropriate.

This reflects the Council's legal duties while recognising the realities of service delivery and decision-making. Equality considerations are particularly important when services are reviewed, redesigned or reduced, and as Local Government Reorganisation progresses. Considering equality at an early stage helps the Council understand potential impacts on residents, communities and the workforce and ensures these are reflected in planning, decision-making and service delivery.

7.2 Using Equality Information and Learning

The Council publishes equality information each year to show how equality is being considered across its work. This includes information about the Council's workforce including the gender pay gap, and where appropriate, people who use its services.

Reviewing this information helps build understanding of how different groups experience employment and access services, and where barriers may exist. Equality monitoring also highlights gaps in understanding and where further insight could be helpful. Monitoring activity remains proportionate and focused on supporting learning and improvement rather than meeting targets for their own sake.

7.3 Equality in Commissioning and Procurement

Many services are delivered by partner organisations, and the way services are bought and commissioned can influence people's experiences. When procuring goods and services, whether delivered directly by the Council or on its behalf, the Council considers equality, fairness and accessibility in a proportionate way.

Suppliers and partners are expected to share a commitment to inclusive and respectful practice and to meet their responsibilities under equality law. By being clear about expectations and encouraging fair access to opportunities, including for local businesses and community organisations, the Council seeks to ensure public money is used responsibly and supports positive outcomes for people who live, work or visit the district.

8. Equality as an Employer

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Our workforce plays a vital role in delivering services. Creating an inclusive working environment helps staff feel respected, supported and able to do their best work.

Equality in employment is about embedding it in everyday practice, supported by policies, training and leadership. Delivering learning around dignity at work, inclusion and respectful behaviour helps ensure equality is not treated as an add-on, but as part of how the organisation operates.

As the Council prepares for the transition to a new unitary authority as part of Local Government Reorganisation, we will continue to support staff through fair processes, clear communication, opportunities to engage with change and access to wellbeing and development support. We recognise that organisational change can affect people differently and will continue to consider equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the transition. This learning-based approach will help support staff wellbeing, resilience and fair decision-making.

Embedding equality within workplace culture helps ensure the Council remains a place where people feel respected, valued and supported to work collaboratively, contribute their skills and experience, and deliver inclusive, high-quality services for our communities.

8.1 Equality in Everyday Employment Practice

The Council has a range of employment policies that apply to all staff and prospective employees. These policies set shared expectations around behaviour, fairness, support and accountability, helping to create a working environment that is inclusive and respectful.

Rather than being viewed as stand-alone documents, these policies support everyday practice — guiding how people are treated, how issues are addressed and how decisions are made. They cover areas such as equality of opportunity, dignity at work, flexible working and work–life balance, and provide a framework for preventing and addressing discrimination, bullying and harassment. The Council keeps these policies under review to ensure they continue to reflect how the organisation works and evolves.

8.2 Learning and Support for an Inclusive Workplace

An inclusive working culture relies on people having the confidence, awareness and understanding to apply equality principles in their roles. Equality learning supports this by encouraging reflection on how behaviours and decisions affect colleagues and the communities the Council serves.

The Council's approach to learning is shaped by its wider values and culture, and is embedded through a range of activity, including Dignity at Work training, induction, refresher learning, targeted workshops and access to guidance and resources. This supports a consistent approach across the organisation, in the same way that equality learning informs service design and delivery.

This approach helps to:

- promote fair and respectful behaviour at work
- support inclusive leadership by managers and Members
- recognise and value different perspectives and experiences
- build confidence in addressing issues such as discrimination, bullying or harassment
- maintain a working environment where people feel safe, valued and supported

As the Council prepares for the transition to a new unitary authority, supporting an inclusive workplace will remain important. We will continue to provide staff with learning, guidance and support that helps them understand and apply equality principles in their day-to-day roles. Maintaining a positive and inclusive culture will help support staff wellbeing, resilience and fair decision-making, while ensuring employees feel respected, valued and able to continue delivering high-quality services for our communities.

9. Engagement and Listening

The Council believes that listening to people helps us make good decisions. Engagement is about learning what matters to people and understanding how Council decisions may affect them. By hearing from a wide range of voices, the Council can build a better picture of local needs and use this insight to help shape services, policies and partnership work where appropriate.

9.1 How We Approach Engagement

The Council's Engagement Policy sets out how engagement is planned and delivered. It reflects learning from previous activity and supports an approach that is flexible, proportionate and suited to different communities.

Engagement is planned based on who the Council needs to hear from and the most appropriate ways to involve them. In practice, this means the Council seeks to:

- plan engagement proportionately and make effective use of available resources
- encourage participation from a wide range of people, including those less likely to take part
- provide suitable opportunities for involvement, recognising different needs and circumstances

Page 231 Good engagement is not just about collecting feedback. It is also about being open and realistic about what can be influenced, and using what people tell us to improve understanding over time. The Council seeks to be clear about why engagement is taking place and how feedback will be used to help manage expectations.

Where appropriate, engagement insight is considered alongside other information to help inform decisions within available resources. Over time, this approach supports stronger relationships with communities and more meaningful ongoing conversations.

The Council's Engagement Policy sets out how we will continue to involve residents, communities, partners and staff in decisions that affect them. As the Council prepares for the transition to a new unitary authority, engagement will remain an important way of understanding different experiences, identifying potential barriers and ensuring a wide range of voices are heard. The insight gained through engagement helps build our understanding of local needs and supports informed, fair and inclusive decision-making. By listening to people and learning from their experiences, we can continue to develop services and policies that are responsive to the communities we serve.

10. Measuring Progress

Measuring progress helps the Council understand how well it is meeting its commitment to equality, accessibility and inclusion. We use information, feedback and insight to understand how people experience our services, identify areas of good practice and highlight where further action may be needed. Sharing this information helps support openness, learning and informed decision-making.

The Equality Strategy 2026-2030 builds on the learning, achievements and experience gained through the Council's Equality Strategy 2022-2026, while responding to current priorities and future challenges.

An annual update on progress against this strategy will be provided through the Council's reporting arrangements. This will include key achievements from both the current and previous Equality Strategy, helping to demonstrate the difference this work is making, support accountability and identify opportunities for further improvement. As the strategy is implemented, we will continue to review and strengthen our activities in response to feedback, emerging needs, changing legislation and best practice. In terms of measuring success, we will develop a performance evaluation and reporting framework which will align with the priorities set out in the strategy.

11. Equality Objectives 2026-2030

The Council publishes equality objectives to guide its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion over the period 2026 to 2028. These objectives provide a clear focus for how the Council will continue to embed equality in its work, particularly as it operates within a changing local government context.

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Objective 1: Continue to Deliver Fair and Accessible Services

Continue to deliver services that are fair and accessible by identifying and addressing barriers where reasonable and proportionate, and keeping services under review to ensure they meet local needs.

Objective 2: Strengthen Inclusive Engagement and Communication

Strengthen engagement and communication so that residents are informed and able to share their views, in line with the Council's engagement approach.

Objective 3: Improve Understanding of Our Communities and Support Inclusion

Improve understanding of local communities to support inclusion, promote respect and strengthen community cohesion.

Objective 4: Support an Inclusive and Representative Workforce

Support an inclusive workplace where employees feel respected, supported and able to contribute, promoting fairness across recruitment, development and progression.

12. Equality Action Plan

The Equality Action Plan translates these objectives into practical actions. It focuses on continuing to embed equality into everyday work, supporting learning and preparing for future change. The plan will be kept under review to ensure it remains relevant, proportionate and effective.

13. Contact Us

We welcome feedback and involvement from residents, partners and community groups.

Email: equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk.

If you need this information in another format or language, please contact us and we will do our best to help.

Equality Action Plan 2026 - 2030		
Theme	What we will continue to do	Examples of how these are being delivered
Understanding Our Communities Better (Supports Objectives 1, 2 & 3)	• Use available information (including service feedback, engagement, complaints and partner insight) to understand how people experience services and identify any differences between groups • Apply this understanding to inform service planning, review and improvement • Where analytical tools or AI-supported insight are used, remain mindful of limitations and potential bias, and balance this with professional judgement and local knowledge. • Use available evidence to consider potential equality impacts linked to service change, including work associated with the Local Government Reorganisation.	Equality Impacts: Equality considerations built into quarterly performance and service monitoring reports to support informed decision-making. Service Feedback and Complaints Data: Using feedback and complaints data to identify recurring themes and improve services, including understanding differing experiences across groups. Equality Data and Evidence: Using available data proportionately to inform service planning, policy development and Local Government Reorganisation activity. Family Hub Services: Using tools such as pre- and post-questionnaires to measure the outcomes, understand impact and improve delivery.

		Using Insight to Inform Strategy: Applying consultation findings and local evidence to inform strategies including in our Shared Homelessness Strategy.
Making Our Services Easier to Access and Use <i>(Supports Objectives 1 & 2)</i>	• Apply the Council's approach to equality (Section 7) within service design and policy development. • Use feedback and insight to identify and address barriers to access where reasonable and proportionate • Communicate clearly with residents about service changes, including those connected to the Local Government Reorganisation. • Where reasonably practicable, ensure public-facing information reflects accessibility guidance and good practice. • Keep services under review to help understand how changes may affect different residents and communities over time.	Parkside Access Audit: Improving access to services by identifying barriers and implementing reasonable adjustments. Inclusive Play Audits: Creating more inclusive environments by reviewing accessibility across public spaces and delivering targeted improvements. Social Housing Allocations Policy Review: Improving fairness and accessibility through inclusive policy development supported by Equality Impact Assessments. Equality in Decision-Making: Embedding equality considerations within committee reports to support transparent and informed decisions. Consultation and Service Design: Engagement activities such as the Local Plan consultation used to shape services and policies based on resident feedback. Clear and Accessible Communication: Providing information in plain English and accessible formats when services or policies change.
Listening to People and Supporting Their Involvement <i>(Supports Objectives 2 & 3)</i>	• Deliver engagement activity in line with the Council's approach (Section 9), providing opportunities for people to be involved in local decision-making • Work with voluntary, community, cultural and faith organisations to support dialogue and improve understanding • Where appropriate, use accessible communication tools to help widen participation. • Consider engagement findings alongside other information to help inform decisions and service development over time.	Community Engagement Activity: Delivering engagement linked to regeneration, housing and service planning. Inclusive Engagement Methods: Using a mix of digital and non-digital approaches (e.g. online surveys, paper forms, face-to-face engagement) to reach diverse communities. Annual Places Survey and Budget Survey: Informing service improvement through regular corporate and service surveys and the effective use of resident feedback.

		Partnership Working: Working with voluntary, community and faith organisations (e.g. Bromsgrove Community Wellbeing Theme Group, Family Hub Network) to strengthen engagement and understanding. Community Collaboration: Working with residents and groups (e.g. allotment associations) to co-design services and improve local spaces.
Bringing Communities Together and Valuing Differences <i>(Supports Objectives 2 & 3)</i>	• Support inclusion and community cohesion through partnership-led activity, where resources and capacity allow. • Maintain awareness of hate crime reporting processes and use available information to help understand local issues and trends. • Continue to engage with voluntary and community sector organisations during periods of change. • Take care to ensure Council communications are respectful and inclusive, including where AI-supported tools are used.	Community Investment Fund and Equality Small Grants Scheme: Strengthening community cohesion and shared spaces by supporting inclusive, community-led activity, with over £1 million invested through the Community Investment Fund and £10,000 through the Equality Small Grants Scheme. Community Safety and Prevention: Delivering coordinated programmes to support safety and security, including prevention activity, awareness campaigns, Designing Out Crime initiatives and partnership working through the Safer Bromsgrove Tasking Group. Neighbourhood Services and Local Environment: Providing reassurance and helping to reduce anti-social behaviour and improve local environments, by working with partners to carry out Community Safety Assessments and Environmental Visual Audits. Hate Crime Awareness and Reporting: Raising awareness and promoting support services through engagement and campaigns to increase reporting and ensure safe, accessible systems for vulnerable victims and witnesses. Community Engagement and Involvement: Delivering events, outreach and engagement activity to raise awareness, alongside supporting volunteering, community-led initiatives and groups (including SEND networks) with resources, venues and connections.

Supporting our Workforce and Building an Inclusive Workplace <i>(Supports Objective 4)</i>	• Use workforce equality information already collected to help understand staff experiences and identify patterns over time. • Provide managers and Elected Members with guidance and advice to support fair, inclusive leadership and everyday decision-making. • Build on existing learning and development activity to promote inclusive ways of working, support wellbeing and encourage fair treatment at work. • Where new technology is used in workforce-related processes, consider potential equality implications and maintain appropriate human oversight. • Continue to promote awareness of wellbeing support and encourage a working environment where staff feel able to seek support when needed.	Workforce Data and Insight: Improving equality data within HR systems to better understand staff experiences and inform workforce planning. Training and Development: Delivering equality, diversity and inclusion training to staff, managers and Members to support inclusive leadership. Wellbeing Support: Promoting the Employee Assistance Programme and wider wellbeing support to staff. Inclusive Policies: Ensuring HR policies reflect inclusive practice and support fairness. Staff Engagement: Delivering the annual Staff Survey and using findings to improve workplace culture and staff experience.
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Bromsgrove District Council

Engagement Policy

2026-2030

Title	Bromsgrove District Council Engagement Policy 2026-2030
Description	This policy sets out the Council's approach to delivering inclusive and meaningful community engagement over the period 2026–2030
Created by	Engagement and Equalities Advisor
Date created	April 2026
Maintained by	Engagement and Equalities Advisor
Next Review Date	April 2030

Version number	Modified by	Modifications made	Date modified	Status

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs. Email:

equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk or Phone: 01527 548284

1. Purpose

At Bromsgrove District Council, we want residents, communities and partners to feel informed, listened to and able to contribute to decisions that affect their lives. Engagement helps us understand how people experience services, what matters to them, and how decisions may affect different communities. This insight supports better understanding, strengthens the evidence we use, and helps ensure decisions are fair, balanced and responsive to local needs.

This policy provides a framework for planned consultation and engagement on wider Council policies, strategies, service changes and significant decisions. It sits alongside the day-to-day democratic routes through which residents raise individual matters with councillors and officers.

This Engagement Policy builds on the engagement work already taking place across the Council and the learning gained from it. In recent years, we have strengthened how we engage with communities, developing a more consistent and practical approach that supports service delivery and decision-making.

As we continue to develop our approach between 2026 and 2030, we will focus on making engagement accessible and proportionate, maintaining and strengthening relationships with communities and partners, and continuing to listen to a wide range of voices, particularly those who may be less likely to take part. We will be open about how feedback is used and realistic about what engagement can influence, helping to build trust over time.

The policy also supports the Council through Local Government Reorganisation, helping ensure residents, communities, businesses and partners remain informed and able to contribute to discussions about future services and local priorities.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all consultation and engagement activity undertaken or commissioned by Bromsgrove District Council the Council is seeking views from residents, communities, businesses, partners or stakeholders to help shape policies, strategies, service design, service changes, priorities or other significant decisions. Activity may range from statutory consultation to more informal engagement and may take place at a corporate, service, or local level.

Engagement may be undertaken to meet statutory requirements or to support service improvement and community involvement. It plays an important role in understanding views and informing policies, priorities, services, budgets, and decision-making, including supporting Equality Impact Assessments.

It does not apply to individual enquiries, requests for service, complaints, appeals, enforcement matters, planning or licensing casework, or other specific cases raised by residents with councillors or officers. These matters are considered through the relevant statutory, democratic, complaints, customer service or casework processes.

This policy applies to external consultation and engagement activity only. It does not cover internal consultation within the organisation, such as matters relating to employee pay and conditions, which are managed separately through Human Resources. Consultation on planning applications, the Local Plan, and Traffic Regulation Orders is also outside the scope of this policy.

Across all engagement activity, the Council will take a coordinated and proportionate approach. This includes using established engagement channels and partnerships, encouraging

participation from a wide range of people, and using a mix of methods to reflect different needs and circumstances. The Council will be clear about what can be influenced and will ensure that feedback is considered alongside other relevant evidence when making decisions.

3. Building on our Successes

Engagement activity across the Council has helped us build a better understanding of how people want to take part and what supports meaningful involvement. We have delivered a wide range of engagement activity, including consultations on local planning and regeneration, service-level engagement in areas such as housing and community services, and corporate surveys used to inform decision-making. Partnership working, for example through community wellbeing groups and local networks, has also helped strengthen local insight and collaboration.

We know that engagement works best when it is clear, relevant and easy to access, and when people understand how their feedback will be used. Using a mix of online and face-to-face approaches has helped us reach a broader range of people, while working with voluntary and community organisations has strengthened trust and improved our reach into different communities.

This learning will continue to shape how we approach engagement, ensuring it remains practical, proportionate and focused on supporting effective decision-making.

4. Our Responsibilities

National responsibilities

The Council has a responsibility to involve residents and communities in its work. This includes requirements under legislation such as the Equality Act 2010, Local Government Acts and national guidance. We follow established principles of good consultation, ensuring engagement takes place at the right time, provides clear information and allows people to give informed views. Alongside this, our approach reflects a broader commitment to openness, transparency and accountability.

What this means locally

In Bromsgrove, engagement supports the Council's priorities and the delivery of the Equality Strategy and Action Plan. It helps us understand lived experiences and identify how different people may be affected by decisions. This includes continuing to improve how we reach a range of communities, use insight to inform service delivery and link engagement more clearly to equality considerations and service planning.

We will continue to use a mix of digital and non-digital methods to ensure engagement remains accessible and appropriate.

Local Government Reorganisation

The Council recognises that Local Government Reorganisation will bring significant change as Worcestershire transitions to two new unitary authorities from April 2028. During this period, engagement will be an essential tool for understanding the needs, priorities and concerns of residents, communities and stakeholders. We are committed to providing clear opportunities for people to participate in conversations about the future of local services and places, ensuring that community insight helps inform planning and decision-making throughout the transition. By taking

an open, accessible and coordinated approach, we will support meaningful involvement and help maintain trust during a period of change.

5. Our Approach to Community Engagement

What we mean by community engagement

Residents and stakeholders can influence the Council's work through a range of democratic, customer service and engagement routes, including elected Members, public meetings, committee and scrutiny processes, petitions, and provide feedback through established customer feedback and complaints processes. Information on these routes is available through the Council's website. These routes are an important part of local democracy. This policy focuses specifically on planned consultation and engagement activity, rather than individual casework or service requests.

Community engagement is about listening to people, understanding their experiences and involving them, where appropriate, in decisions that affect their lives. It builds on existing engagement activity across the Council and ranges from providing information through to working more closely with communities to shape services and solutions.

Why engagement matters

Engagement helps the Council better understand local needs and experiences, design services that are more accessible and appropriate, and make informed and balanced decisions. It also supports stronger relationships with communities and helps build trust over time.

For communities, engagement provides an opportunity to share views, contribute to local decisions and better understand how services are shaped. Where appropriate, it can also support confidence and involvement in local issues.

Good engagement is clear, proportionate and takes place early enough to support decision-making.

What we mean by community

People may identify with communities in different ways, including where they live, shared interests or experiences, or aspects of identity or background. Individuals may belong to more than one community.

Our approach reflects this by building on existing connections while continuing to reach a broader range of people and perspectives.

6. Who is Involved and How We Work Together

Community engagement is a shared responsibility across the Council. Understanding how people experience services is an important part of delivering effective and responsive services. Engagement activity already takes place across a range of services, and this policy supports a more coordinated and consistent approach.

Across the Council engagement is coordinated to reduce duplication, make best use of resources and ensure that insight is shared and used effectively.

Service areas lead engagement relevant to their work, supported by the Policy Team. This includes designing proportionate engagement, selecting appropriate methods and using findings to inform decisions and service improvements.

Elected Members play an important role in representing community views and supporting engagement locally. Through ward work, surgeries, local conversations, committee meetings, scrutiny, casework and day-to-day contact with residents, Members help ensure local views, concerns and experiences are understood and reflected in the Council's work. Members play a key role in ensuring community engagement reaches as many residents as possible and help to interpret what the feedback tells us, alongside our shared understanding of a topic.

Putting this into Practice

Community engagement will continue to be part of how the Council works day to day, building on existing practice.

Embedding engagement in everyday work

Engagement will be reflected in policy development, service design and review, budget setting and Equality Impact Assessments. This helps ensure decisions are informed by a combination of service knowledge, data and local insight.

A proportionate and inclusive approach

We recognise that not all decisions require the same level of engagement and that people experience different barriers to participation. Engagement will be proportionate to the issue and supported by a mix of methods, with adjustments made where needed to support accessibility.

Working alongside the Equality Strategy

Engagement supports the delivery of the Equality Strategy and Action Plan by helping the Council understand lived experience, recognise different needs and consider the potential impact of decisions.

Engagement during change

During Local Government Reorganisation, we will use engagement to understand local needs, explain developments clearly and support residents, communities, businesses and partners to contribute where decisions can be influenced.

Working with partners and communities

We will continue to work with voluntary, community and partner organisations to strengthen relationships, improve reach and make best use of local knowledge. This helps ensure engagement is practical, relevant and informed by local understanding.

7. Monitoring and Learning

We will take a data-led approach to engagement so that it helps improve outcomes for residents and supports the delivery of the best possible services. For each engagement exercise, we will set clear aims linked to the decision, service or outcome being considered, including who we need to hear from, the level of take-up we are seeking and how we will monitor whether the

approach is reaching a broad and representative range of people. Where appropriate, this will include reviewing participation data, representation and the effectiveness of the methods used. We will use this learning to strengthen future engagement and improve service design and delivery.

8. Get Involved and Contact Us

You can find out about current consultations and engagement opportunities on the Council website www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/strategy/consultations/

We welcome feedback and involvement from residents, partners and community groups.

Email: equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Phone: 01527 548284

Cabinet
2026

16 September

Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Policy 2026/27

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor S Nock
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Debra Goodall Assistant Director Finance and Customer Services
Report Author	Revenue Services Manager david.riley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk 01527 548 418
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	No
Relevant Council Priority	
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet RECOMMEND that:-

- i) The revised section 13A(1)(C) policy be approved and adopted.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The council has the power under section 13A(1)(C) of The Local Government Finance Act 1992 (LGFA '92) to reduce the amount of council tax that a person is liable to pay. The power may be exercised on a case-by-case basis or by determining a class of case in which the liability will be reduced.
- 2.2 The existing policy for determining section 13A(1)(C) reductions was adopted from 1st April 2024 and is due to be reviewed.
- 2.3 The review has considered representations made by the Marie Curie charity, which has advocated for council tax discounts for individuals living with terminal illness, and specific guidelines for support for people with terminal illness has been incorporated into the draft policy.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 The existing policy sets out when officers will use discretionary powers to provide case-by-case reductions. Guidelines for the assessment and award of discounts for Worcestershire County Council care leavers, support under Government's flood recovery framework, ad-hoc

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Government supports schemes, and reductions in cases of exceptional hardship are set out within the policy.

- 3.2 The revised policy includes guidelines for reductions where the liable person for council tax has been diagnosed with a terminal illness.
- 3.3 The terminal illness support has been considered following representation made by the Marie Curie charity, which has requested local councils provide a 100% discount to people who have received a diagnosis of terminal illness.
- 3.4 Marie Curie has proposed the discount because around 110,000 people die in poverty each year in the UK. The charity states that a terminal diagnosis often brings lost income and higher living costs, and council tax relief could provide significant financial support.
- 3.5 The revised policy sets out that where the liable person has been diagnosed with a terminal illness then a discount of up to 100% will be considered. The reduction will not be available for second homes or empty homes, and when assessing reductions consideration will be made to the financial circumstances of the household.
- 3.6 The policy intends to balance appropriate support for people with terminal illness with the financial costs of providing relief and the financial position of the household receiving relief. A blanket policy to apply 100% relief to all taxpayers facing terminal illness would mean granting support to individuals with the ability to pay their council tax liability, to taxpayers who own multiple dwellings, and to taxpayers of unoccupied homes or second homes.
- 3.7 The policy intends to provide a flexible approach to the assessment of support in cases of terminal illness and will allow the council to work with the individual to maximise the support they are receiving, including support from energy providers and charitable organisations, ensuring they are not solely reliant on the provision of a council tax discount.
- 3.8 Discounts will be considered where a medical professional has confirmed terminal illness by completion of an SR-1 form. Applicants will normally be required to claim all relevant statutory support, including council tax support, before a discretionary award is considered. Where, following the assessment of support, a liability remains, consideration will be given to the wider financial circumstances of the household, including the ability to pay or where appropriate to defer payment of the liability.

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- 3.9 When assessing the ability to pay the factors that will be considered are:
- Whether the taxpayer is the sole resident of their home and whether there are assets available that would enable council tax liability to be deferred until a later date.
 - Whether the household has capital resources of more than £16,000, excluding the value of their home.
 - Where household income exceeds £35,000 per annum.
- These factors are not intended to operate as absolute limits but will assist officers in determining whether it is reasonable for the household to contribute towards their council tax liability. The proposed thresholds broadly reflect eligibility criteria used within other forms of means-tested or targeted Government support and provide officers with a consistent framework for assessing ability to pay
- 3.10 In developing the proposed approach consideration has been given to how other billing authorities have responded to calls for additional support for residents living with a terminal illness. The use of Section 13A(1)(C) powers is discretionary and approaches vary between authorities; a review of current practice provides context in considering the balance between financial support for vulnerable residents and appropriate use of public funds.
- 3.11 Worcestershire authorities, Wyre Forest District Council, Wychavon District Council, Malvern Hills District Council and Worcester City Council, do not currently provide support to residents with a terminal illness. Taxpayers would be required to apply for council tax support, and where a council tax liability remained, they may make an application for support under exceptional hardship schemes.
- 3.12 Bristol City Council and Manchester City Council have recently introduced specific support schemes for residents with a terminal illness.
- 3.13 The Manchester scheme provides a full reduction in liability upon production of an SR-1 form for a resident of the dwelling and does not require consideration of the wider financial resources available to the household.
- 3.14 The Bristol scheme limits support to residents that are liable for council tax and allows for a proportional relief based on the number of jointly and severally liable taxpayers i.e. where the terminally ill resident is solely liable for council tax 100% support is provided, where two people are jointly and severally liable support would be reduced to 50%.

- 3.15 The proposed Bromsgrove scheme retains an assessment of the household's financial circumstances. This ensures that support can be targeted to households experiencing financial hardship because of terminal illness, whilst avoiding the provision of automatic relief to households with significant income, capital or assets.
- 3.16 The proposed policy is considered to strike a balance between providing compassionate support to residents with a terminal illness and maintaining effective use of public funds. The scheme retains discretion to award up to 100% relief. Unlike schemes that limit relief to a proportion of the liability attributable to the terminally ill person, the scheme recognises that the finances of couples who live together as spouses or as civil partners are typically shared. This enables support to be determined by reference to the financial position of the household.
- 3.17 The council tax legislation provides a route of appeal to the Valuation Tribunal against decisions to refuse to provide support under 13A(1)(C). The policy will provide officers with a framework for making decisions on a case-by-case basis from households requesting discretionary support.
- 3.18 The other key changes in the revised policy are:

Clarification of legislative context

Revised policy adds references to Collection Fund Directions and clarifies the cost of any discretionary reduction is borne entirely by the billing authority.

Expanded Detail on Relief Categories

Care Leavers: Worcestershire County Council must confirm care leaver status. The policy now explains proportional discounts for joint liability more clearly.

Flood Recovery Framework: Includes detailed eligibility criteria, conditions and duration of relief.

Evidence and Applications Process

The revised policy provides a clearer list of evidence requirements, improving transparency and consistency.

Backdating and Appeals

Structured appeal steps and timelines have been added to ensure fairness and clarity for applicants.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Collection Fund (Council Tax Reductions) (England) Directions 2024 require billing authorities to transfer the costs of reductions under 13A(1)(C) from the general fund to the collection fund. This means that the full costs of all 13A(1)(C) reductions are met by the billing authority.
- 4.2 An agreement with Worcestershire County Council is in place which ensures that the authority is reimbursed for the costs of care leaver reductions for WCC care leavers.
- 4.3 No data is available on the precise number of council taxpayers living with a terminal illness. The population of the Bromsgrove District is approximately 102,000, and data indicates that there are around 1,100 deaths each year. Whilst no reliable data exists detailing the number of residents that would be eligible for support the districts ageing population, and the prevalence of conditions such as cancer mean that it can be assumed that a continuing group of residents will meet the SR1 end-of-life criteria.
- 4.4 Only a proportion of the SR-1 cohort will be liable for council tax and require discretionary support and therefore the actual number of awards could be relatively modest. By way of illustration, were 20% of indicative cohort of 100 to 300 taxpayers to qualify for support the annual cost could be between £22,000 and £66,000.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The power to provided reductions to council tax is set out at section 13A(1)(C) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 None

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.2 The administration of discretionary reductions supports the council's Economic Development and Housing priorities by assisting vulnerable

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residents and helping individuals maintain their place within the community.

Climate Change Implications

6.3 None

Equalities and Diversity Implications

6.4 Equalities Impact Assessment completed.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The table below identifies specific risks and mitigations in relation to the administration of discretionary council tax reductions. The table is not exhaustive and provides information on the main identified risks.

Risk	Mitigations
Financial Risk. The cost of discretionary reduction is met by the billing authority, and no specific budget is set aside for provision of reductions.	The costs of discretionary reductions will be monitored monthly and reported to Head of Finance and Customer services
Reputational Risk. The absences of a policy could limit the council's ability to defend valuation tribunal appeals, or result in adverse findings by the local government ombudsman	Approval of the policy will mitigate the risks and provided clear framework for the assessment of applications for support.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A – Council Tax Section 13A(1)(C) Policy
Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Cllr S Nock	Jan 2026

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Lead Director / Assistant Director	Debra Goodall	Jan 2026
Financial Services	Debra Goodall	Jan 2026

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Bromsgrove District Council

Council Tax Section 13A(1)(C) Policy

1. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out Bromsgrove District Council's approach to awarding discretionary council tax reductions under Section 13A(1)(C) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

It applies to all council taxpayers who may be eligible for reductions and provides a clear framework for:

- The criteria for awarding relief.
- The application and evidence process.
- Governance and decision-making arrangements.

The council aims to use its discretionary power to:

- Prevent homelessness.
- Support vulnerable residents to retain their place in the community.
- Assist customers during personal crisis and exceptional circumstances.
- Promote financial independence through short-term relief.
- Provide compassionate support for residents diagnosed as terminally ill.

2. Legislative Framework

The power to provide discretionary reductions to council tax was introduced by the Local Government Act 2003, which inserted section 13A into the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 retained this power within section 13A(1)(C).

Under 13A(1)(C) a billing authority may reduce the council tax payable by any amount it considers appropriate. This power can be applied:

- To a defined class of cases.
- On a case-by-case basis.

The Collection Fund (Council Tax Reductions) (England) Directions 2024 require that, except in specific cases related to the removal of tax credits, the cost of reductions under section 13A(1)(C) is borne entirely by the billing authority. This means the district council must reimburse the precepting authorities for any council tax income lost through discretionary reductions.

3. Principles for Awarding Discretionary Relief

When awarding discretionary reductions, the council will apply general principles and consider relief where:

Worcestershire County Council Care Leavers

A discretionary reduction will be provided to care leavers under the age of 25 who were supported by Worcestershire County Council. The discount will be provided in-line with the care leavers concordat for the care leaver's sole or main residence.

Eligibility Criteria

- The applicant must be under 25 years of age
- Worcestershire County Council must have acted as the corporate parent.

Conditions

- The care leaver must claim Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) first. The discretionary reduction will be considered after LCTS, and all other applicable discounts or exemptions have been applied.
- Worcestershire County Council must confirm support for the award of any reduction.

Amount of Reduction

- A qualifying care leaver who is the sole resident of a property will receive a 100% discount.
- Where the care leaver shares liability (e.g. joint tenants) the discount will be proportional. For example, if two people are jointly liable and one is a care leaver, the discount will cover 50% of the council tax charge.

Special Circumstances

- If a care leaver under 25 moves in with a parent or grandparent and this results in the loss of a single person discount, or disregard discount, Section 13A(1)(C) will be used to provide an equivalent discount.

Policy Updates

- Support for care leavers will be amended as necessary to reflect any changes to the Worcestershire County Council Care Leavers Concordat.

Flood Recovery Framework

In a severe weather event with significant wide-area impacts, the Government may activate the Flood Recovery Framework. Section 13A(1)(C) powers will be used to provide support to qualifying households in accordance with central government rules.

Eligibility Criteria

Reductions will be provided in-line with the Flood Recovery Framework and the circumstances for providing relief will be:

- The property is the taxpayer's primary residence; and
- The property is uninhabitable due to flooding because:
 - Flood water entered habitable areas; or
 - Flood water did not enter habitable areas, but the local authority determines the property was otherwise unliveable for a period of time.
- The property is temporary accommodation for a household unable to return to their home due to flooding.

Conditions

- Second homes and empty homes will not be eligible.

Amount of Reduction

- Primary residence: 100% reduction for a minimum of three months, or while the household is unable to return to its primary residence.
- Temporary Accommodation: 100% council tax discount on any temporary accommodation for households unable to return to their home.

Special Circumstances

- Where a government scheme has been activated for 2 separate instances of flooding within 3 months, the 2 discounts would run concurrently.
- Where discount is still required after 15 to 18 months Government may ask for additional information to support the discount.

Terminal Illness Support

A discretionary reduction will be considered where a liable person has been diagnosed as terminally ill and a medical professional has confirmed they have less than 12 months to live.

Eligibility Criteria

- The dwelling is the sole or main residence of a liable person diagnosed as terminally ill; and
- A medical professional has confirmed terminal illness by completion of an SR1 medical report.

Conditions

- Reductions for terminal illness will not be provided for second homes or empty homes.

Amount of Reduction

- Where the liable person is terminally ill and forms part of a single household with the other residents of the dwelling a reduction of up to 100% will be considered.
- Where the liable person is terminally ill and does not form part of a single household with the other residents a proportional reduction will be considered.

Special Circumstances

- Determination of reduction will not be limited to an assessment of health status of members of the household; consideration will be given to the financial circumstances of the household.

Government Schemes of Support

The council will implement any Government-funded discount schemes in line with guidance issued by central government. Where schemes include discretionary funding, allocation guidelines will be determined by the Assistant Director Finance and Customer Services in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder.

Examples:

- Covid-19 Hardship Fund.
- Council Tax Hardship Support Fund.

Other Cases (Extreme Hardship)

The council will consider a discretionary reduction where:

- The taxpayer has an outstanding council tax balance and faces extreme financial hardship.
- The household members cannot contribute towards payment.
- Recovery action would result in severe hardship.
- There is no access to assets or funds to meet liability.
- There are no alternative means of securing payment of council tax.
- The taxpayer is unable to restructure payments or debts.
- The taxpayer demonstrates they have no available income to pay their council tax.

Evidence Required:

- Full income and expenditure details.
- Asset and capital evidence.
- Utility and household bills.

4. Relationship to Other Schemes

Section 13A(1)(C) reduction will be considered after applications for:

- Council Tax Discounts and Reductions
- Local Council Tax Support
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Exceptional Hardship and Essential Living Funds
- Discretionary Council Tax Support provided under Government funded schemes.

5. Applications and Evidence

Taxpayers, or an authorised representative, must apply for the discretionary reduction in writing, clearly setting out the circumstances on which the application is based. This application will be in addition to any application for Local Council Tax Support (LCTS)

Where the initial application indicates a discretionary reduction may be appropriate, the council will request further evidence which may include (but is not limited to):

- Household composition and income/expenditure details for all members of the household.
- Evidence of all capital and assets of the taxpayer, including mortgage balances and property value where property is owned.
- Income and expenditure for the period relevant to the application up to the current date.
- Utility and household bills.

6. Amount of Award and Duration

The amount and duration of the reduction will be determined at the council's discretion, based on the evidence supplied and the circumstances of the claim.

The reduction will be calculated as a daily amount, and the taxpayer will be notified on the basis that their circumstances remain unchanged for the remainder of the tax year.

Where the reduction ends before the end of the tax year, the taxpayer will be notified of the end date, and the reduction will be apportioned accordingly.

The reduction will end if:

- The tax year for which the reduction was made ends.
- The liable person changes or an additional resident joins the household.
- The council taxpayer enters any form of insolvency process.
- The council taxpayer's finance circumstances significantly alter.
- The liability for council tax ends.

7. Backdating

Section 13A(1)(C) reductions will, where applicable, be backdated to the start of the tax year in which the application is made.

Where a new liability has been created for a previous tax year, backdating will be considered if the application is made within six months of the notification of liability.

Backdating for periods before the tax year in which the application is made, or outside of the six-month window, will be considered where the taxpayer demonstrates continuous exceptional hardship. Evidence will be required for the entire period.

8. Notification of Award

The council will notify the outcome of each application **in writing**, including:

- The reason for the decision.
- The period of the award and the end date (if applicable).
- A reminder that the taxpayer must inform the council of any relevant changes in circumstances.
- Details of the appeals process.

9. Appeals

Appeals against the council's decision may be made under Section 16 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:

- The taxpayer must first appeal in writing to the council, stating reasons for disagreement.
- The council will reconsider and notify the outcome in writing.
- If the taxpayer remains dissatisfied, they may appeal to the Valuation Tribunal within two months of the council's decision.
- If the council does not respond within two months, the taxpayer may appeal directly to the Valuation Tribunal.

10. Fraud

The council is committed to protecting public funds and ensuring funds are awarded only to eligible applicants. Any applicant who fraudulently claims a reduction by providing false information or evidence may have committed an offence under the Fraud Act 2006. Suspected fraud will be investigated and may lead to legal proceedings.



Equality Impact Assessment

Title of Service, Policy, Procedure, Spending Review being Proposed	Council Tax Section 13A(1)(C) Policy
Name of Service Area	Revenue Services
Name of Officer completing this assessment	David Riley
Date Assessment Started	1st November 2025
Name of Decision Maker (in relation to the change)	Redditch Borough Council – Full Council Bromsgrove District Council – Full Council
Date Decision Made	Redditch Bromsgrove

Please ensure the following:

- That the document is understandable to a reader who has not read any other documents and explains (on its own) how the Public Sector Equality Duty is met. This does not need to be lengthy but must be complete.
- That available support information and data is identified and where it can be found. Also be clear about highlighting gaps in existing data or evidence that you hold, and how you have sought to address these knowledge gaps.
- That the equality impacts are capable of aggregation with those of other EIAs to identify the cumulative impact of all service changes made by the council on different groups of people

Overview

Provide a clear overview of the aims of the service/policy/procedure and the proposed changes being made. Will the current service users' needs continue to be met? Why is the change being proposed? What needs or duties is it designed to meet?

This impact assessment considers the changes to the council's policy for reduction of council tax under Section 13A(1)(C) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. The act gives the council power to reduce the amount of council tax payable on a case-by-case basis, or by defining a class of case where a reduction shall apply. The policy sets a framework for officers to determine applications for support.

In cases of where the taxpayer can demonstrate hardship a reduction of council tax will be made, or in specific types of cases e.g. where the Government has activated the flood recovery framework, officers will have discretion to apply appropriate discounts.

The policy is reviewed to include provision for reduction to be made where a person has a terminal illness.

The policy is broadly intended as a framework for officers to determine reductions for residents with vulnerabilities because of financial hardship, flooding, care leaver status, or terminal illness, and is intended to support vulnerable residents.

Who is the proposal likely to affect?

	Yes	No
All residents	☒	☐
Specific group(s)	☒	☐
All Council employees	☐	☒
Specific group(s) of employees	☐	☒
Other – Provide more details below	☐	☒

Details

Outline who could be affected and how they could be affected by the proposal/service change. Include current service users and those who could benefit from but do not currently access the service.

Changes to the policy allow for support to be applied where a person has a terminal illness, and it is appropriate to provide support having regard to the financial position of the household. The change will principally be target at support for terminally ill residents.

The policy provides a mechanism for support to be provided to household impacted by flooding events, and to provide support to young care leavers under the age of 25, and people experiencing financial hardship.

Evidence and data used to inform your equality impact assessment

What data, research, or trend analysis have you used? Describe how you have got your information and what it tells you.

Specific local datasets have been reviewed, including:

- **OHID Datasets:** OHID data provides information on mortality within the districts. Cancer remains a leading cause of death within the districts, and this coupled with national data that indicates 70% of deaths occur in hospital or home, provides insight that a significant proportion of people living with terminal illness will remain in their home and accruing a council tax liability.
- **Council Tax records** showing the number of households applying for discretionary hardship relief and the circumstances under which reductions have previously been granted. This provides insight into patterns of vulnerability linked to financial hardship.
- **Council Tax records for care leaver discount awards.** Identifying the number of young people aged under 25 who have benefited from discretionary discounts.

The data collectively demonstrates that the groups most likely to require support under Section 13A(1)(c) include

- Individuals with terminal illness (covered under disability)
- Young adults aged under 25 (care leavers)
- Low-income households
- Households affected by external events such as flooding, who are temporarily financially vulnerable

A gap has been identified in the availability of breakdowns by **race**, **sex**, and **religion**, as these are not routinely captured alongside Council Tax data. Further work will be undertaken to improve voluntary data collection to better understand differential impacts.

Engagement and Consultation

What engagement and consultation have you undertaken about the proposal with current service users, potential users and other stakeholders? What is important to them regarding the current service? How does (or could) the service meet their needs? How will they be affected by the proposal? What potential impacts did they identify because of their protected characteristic(s)? Did they identify any potential barriers they may face in accessing services/other opportunities that meet their needs?

While no formal public consultation was required for the discretionary relief framework, the following engagement informed the assessment:

- **Discussions with frontline Revenues staff**, who provided insight into the barriers residents face when applying for hardship relief, including digital exclusion, literacy challenges, and difficulties for terminally ill residents in completing forms.
- **Engagement with County Council**, on the adoption of discounts for care leavers
- **Review of previous applicants**, gathered through routine customer contact and complaints monitoring, which identified the need for clearer guidance.

The engagement emphasised the importance of:

- flexible, compassionate assessment processes;
- multiple routes for application (phone, online, assisted support); and
- timely decision-making for residents with deteriorating health.

This feedback has shaped proposed mitigations and monitoring plans.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Due regard must be given to the three aims of the Equality Duty. This means that you must consciously think about the three aims as part of the process of decision-making. Consider the current service and any proposed changes, thinking about what issues may arise.

Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation How does the proposal/service ensure that there is no barrier or disproportionate impact for anyone with a particular protected characteristic	The policy provides a structured and transparent mechanism for assessing hardship-related reductions, ensuring consistent treatment across all protected groups. By explicitly including residents with terminal illness and care leavers, the policy seeks to remove barriers that these groups experience when engaging with statutory services. The discretionary nature of the policy enables officers to make reasonable adjustments, such as accepting third-party representation or fast-tracking applications for terminally ill residents
Advance equality of opportunity between different groups How does the proposal/service ensure that its intended outcomes promote equality of opportunity for users? Identify inequalities faced by those with specific protected characteristic(s).	Residents with disabilities, long-term health conditions, or terminal illnesses are more likely to experience financial hardship. The policy provides targeted support that directly addresses these inequalities. Care leavers, who are disproportionately young and often economically disadvantaged, also benefit from tailored relief. The policy therefore contributes to reducing financial inequality between vulnerable and non-vulnerable groups
Foster good relations between different groups Does the service contribute to good relations or to broader community cohesion objectives? How does it achieve this aim?	No applicable

Is there evidence of actual or potential unfairness for the following equality groups?

- Does the proposal target or exclude a specific equality group or community?
 - Does it affect some equality groups or communities differently and can this be justified?
 - Is the proposal likely to be equally accessed by all equality groups and communities? If not, can this be justified?
- (It may be useful to consider other groups, not included in the Equality Act, especially if the proposal is specifically for them e.g. lone parents, refugees, unemployed people, carers)

Impact of proposal

Describe the likely impact of the proposal on people because of their protected characteristic and how they may be affected. How likely is it that people with this protected characteristic will be negatively affected? What are the barriers that might make access difficult or stop different groups or communities accessing the proposal? How great will that impact be on their well-being? Could the proposal promote equality and good relations between different groups? How?

If you have identified any area of actual or potential unfairness that cannot be justified, can you eliminate or minimise this?

What mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove this impact? (Include these in the action plan at the end of the assessment) Equal treatment does not always produce equal outcomes; sometimes you will have to take specific steps for particular groups to address an existing disadvantage or to meet differing needs.

Protected Group	Impact of proposal	Justification for any actual or potential unfairness identified	If you have identified any area of actual or potential unfairness that cannot be justified, can you eliminate or minimise this?
Age	Positive impact for care leavers under 25	LA has statutory parental responsibility for young care leavers, who may face known financial vulnerability; tailored support is appropriate.	
Disability	The policy is expected to have a significant positive impact on disabled people, particularly residents with terminal illnesses and long-term health conditions who may face increased living costs, reduced income and barriers to employment.	Policy explicitly includes terminally ill applicants and disabilities often correlate with financial hardship.	

Transgender	No specific impacts identified		
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No specific impacts identified		
Pregnancy and Maternity	Potential minor positive impact through access to discretionary support where financial hardship arises.		
Race	No specific impacts identified		
Religion or Belief	No specific impacts identified		
Sex (Male/ Female)	No specific impacts identified		
Sexual Orientation	No specific impacts identified		

How will you monitor any changes identified?

Monitoring will include:

- quarterly analysis of Section 13A(1)(c) applications, approvals, refusals and reasons for refusal;
- identification of potential adverse impacts through complaint themes, staff feedback and case reviews;
- reviewing any applications from protected groups to identify barriers, delays, or unmet needs;

The actions required to address these findings are set out below.

Action Required	By Whom	By When	Completion Date
Monitor applications and report outcomes annually	Revenue Services Manager	March 2027	

Review policy after first year of operation	Revenue Services Manager	March 2027	

Sign off on completion	Name	Signature	Date
Lead Officer completing assessment	David Riley		1 November 2025
Equality Officer			

When you have completed this assessment, retain a copy and send an electronic copy to the Policy Team (Equalities) attaching any supporting evidence used to carry out the assessment.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

22ND JULY 2026, AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

PRESENT: Councillors S. J. Baxter (Deputy Leader), S. T. Nock, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

Observers: Councillor P. M. McDonald

Officers: Mr J. Leach, Mr. J. Walton, Mr. G. Revans, Mr S. Parry, Mr. M. Bough and Mr M. Austin, Mr J. Bevan and Mrs E. Davies

14/26

TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors K. J. May and K. Taylor.

In the Leader's absence, Councillor S. J. Baxter chaired the meeting in her capacity as Deputy Leader.

15/26

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

16/26

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 17TH JUNE 2026

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 17th June 2026 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 17th June 2026 be approved as a true and accurate record.

17/26

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 16TH JUNE 2026

The Chair invited Councillor P. M. McDonald, in his capacity as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, to present the minutes of the meeting held on 16th June 2026.

It was reported that there were no outstanding recommendations arising from this meeting.

Members were also updated on discussions that had taken place at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held the previous evening. Members were advised that the Bromsgrove Sports and Leisure Centre Update had been considered and that further investigations into the financial information had subsequently been requested.

In addition, Members were advised that discussions had taken place regarding the provision of cool hubs during periods of extreme heat, including concerns relating to conflicting information provided by Worcestershire County Council regarding potential venues that could be utilised for this purpose.

Finally, it was noted that membership of the Finance and Budget Working Group was in the process of being confirmed.

18/26

FOOD WASTE COLLECTIONS IMPLEMENTATION

The Environmental Services Manager presented a report outlining proposals for the implementation of a food waste collection service.

Cabinet was reminded that Government had introduced a new statutory duty under the Environment Act 2021 which required local authorities to introduce a dedicated separate weekly collection of food waste to all households by 31st March 2026. It was noted that Bromsgrove District Council was not currently compliant with this requirement.

Members were informed that there had been conflicting information from Government regarding the provision of ongoing revenue funding for the service. Whilst funding had initially been expected, revenue support had subsequently been incorporated into the wider Local Government Settlement, resulting in a significant annual funding shortfall for the delivery of the service. However, capital funding had been received to support the purchase of vehicles and caddies required for implementation.

Cabinet noted that provision of one million pounds had been included within the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2026/27 to facilitate the introduction of the service. It had originally been anticipated that this allocation would be supplemented by Government funding.

It was reported that the Council had initially intended to procure the service through an outsourced arrangement due to limitations in available land and staffing resources. Whilst this had been considered the most cost-effective option, the approach had subsequently been reviewed following Wyre Forest District Council's withdrawal from the joint procurement process.

Members were advised that officers had maintained ongoing dialogue with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), including correspondence from the Chief Executive. DEFRA had confirmed that it did not intend to take direct enforcement action against

the Council at the present time, although it had acknowledged that the statutory requirements were not being met.

Cabinet was informed that the Council now intended to implement the service on a phased basis, with approximately fifty per cent of households receiving the service during the first phase and around sixty-six per cent during the subsequent phase. The service was expected to commence in January 2027, following delays in the delivery of the required vehicles, which were not anticipated to arrive until December 2026.

Members were further advised that recruitment of staff required to deliver the service would commence imminently. One of the principal challenges was the identification of suitable operational land which could be used jointly with Redditch Borough Council and provide adequate staff parking facilities.

Following a review of land holdings across both Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council, together with discussions with a local land agent, officers had identified two sites in Redditch which would collectively meet operational requirements. It was acknowledged that operating from Redditch would result in increased fuel costs. However, these costs were expected to be offset by savings in staffing for supervisory and management positions.

Cabinet noted that the Council would not initially be able to provide the service to approximately one third of properties within the District, including Houses in Multiple Occupation and some high-density developments. The report outlined the additional revenue funding that would be required to extend the service to all households in accordance with the statutory duty. This matter would be considered further through the budget-setting process for the forthcoming financial year.

Following presentation of the report, Members had detailed discussion and commented on the following matters:

- Members sought clarification regarding the level of Government funding allocated for the implementation of food waste collection services through the Local Government Settlement. Officers advised that Government had declined to provide a breakdown of the funding attributable to food waste collections.
- It was noted that seven collection vehicles were due to be delivered in December 2026, which would provide sufficient capacity to support a district-wide food waste collection service.
- Discussion took place regarding the position of Wyre Forest District Council in light of Local Government Reorganisation. Officers advised that Wyre Forest District Council had maintained that it would not implement a food waste collection service until either dedicated Government revenue funding became available or a new unitary authority was established. Members noted that compliance with the food waste collection requirement remained a statutory

obligation and that recent improvements to Wyre Forest District Council's depot may provide future operational capacity, although no food waste collection vehicles had yet been ordered.

- Cabinet was informed that an update on progress across Worcestershire had been presented to the Leaders' Board. Members noted that, following decisions regarding the future structure of local government within the county, authorities would continue to work collaboratively to develop food waste collection arrangements ahead of Local Government Reorganisation. An update was also provided on the position of other Worcestershire authorities.
- The importance of the Council meeting its statutory obligations and delivering the food waste collection service as soon as possible was emphasised.
- Discussion was had regarding the proposed lease arrangements for the two Redditch sites in the context of Local Government Reorganisation. Officers advised that the immediate priority was to secure suitable facilities to enable service implementation. It was reported that five-year lease agreements were being pursued, incorporating break clauses after three years, which would provide operational certainty whilst retaining flexibility for future review.
- Members queried the potential impact of operating the service from Redditch on residents living furthest from the proposed depot locations. Officers advised that no impact on service delivery was anticipated as collection vehicles would travel across the District as part of their normal operating routes.
- The benefits of a phased implementation programme were discussed. Members noted that the approach would enable officers to assess operational performance and address any issues before expanding the service further. Reference was made to the experience of other local authorities that had implemented services on a Council-wide basis from the outset and subsequently experienced operational difficulties. Cabinet noted that a phased rollout would support resilience and help ensure adequate staffing resources during implementation.
- The food waste collections would mirror the current arrangements for other waste collections. This would be beneficial as staff already knew the areas and would be able to share knowledge with colleagues dealing with the new waste service. It was clarified that only collection days would be mirrored rather than collection rounds.
- The proposed communications plan was also discussed. Members were advised that residents would receive advance notification of the introduction of the service in their area, notice regarding the delivery of food waste caddies and a further information pack explaining how the new arrangements would operate.

NOTED the progress made on food waste collection implementation.

RESOLVED that Authority be granted to the Assistant Director for Regeneration and Property Services to negotiate and finalise the terms of the lease for land at Howard Road and Crossgate Road.

RECOMMENDED that an allocation of additional ongoing revenue of £186,155 for the expansion of the food waste collection service from 2027/28 be considered as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan, with any decision deferred until the full financial implications are assessed alongside wider funding priorities through the budget process.

19/26

LOW COST HOUSING CAPITAL RECEIPTS

The Strategic Housing Services Manager presented the Low Cost Housing Capital Receipts report.

Members were advised that the Council currently held a thirty per cent equity share in one hundred and eleven low cost housing properties through the low cost housing scheme. Cabinet had previously agreed in 2017 that proceeds arising from the sale of these properties should be ring-fenced for strategic housing purposes. A subsequent report considered by Cabinet in December 2024 had explored the potential use of these capital receipts in partnership with Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT). However, due to capacity constraints within BDHT, it had not been possible to progress this initiative.

The report therefore proposed that the Council utilise the available capital receipts to acquire properties for use as temporary accommodation. Members were informed that, following the purchase of suitable properties, a procurement exercise would be undertaken to appoint a registered provider to manage the accommodation on the Council's behalf.

It was noted that approximately £2,000 had been allocated within existing budgets to meet legal and development officer costs associated with property acquisitions. Ongoing management costs were estimated at approximately £6,500 per annum for each accommodation unit.

Members were further advised that the Council would principally seek to acquire existing suitable residential properties. However, opportunities to work with developers through Section 106 housing developments would also be explored where appropriate.

In considering the report Members had detailed discussion and commented on the following points:

- Members welcomed the proposal, noting that it would make effective use of the Council's existing expertise and resources whilst helping to address the shortage of temporary accommodation.
- Clarification was sought regarding the types of properties that would be acquired. Officers advised that both existing suitable

dwelling and properties available through new developments, including Section 106 schemes, would be considered, subject to availability, cost and standards being met.

- Members queried the standards that acquired properties would be required to meet. Officers confirmed that all properties would be assessed against the Council's established acquisition criteria and condition standards before purchase.
- Discussion took place regarding the purpose of the temporary accommodation. Officers explained that the properties would be used to meet the Council's statutory homelessness duties by providing short-term accommodation until suitable long-term housing became available.
- Members noted that the proposals would help reduce the Council's reliance on bed and breakfast accommodation and provide more suitable accommodation for households in need.
- A typographical error within the report was identified which referred to Redditch Borough Council, officers agreed that this would be corrected.
- Members requested that regular progress updates be provided as the scheme developed.
- Officers advised that, subject to available opportunities and funding, it was anticipated that between six and ten properties could be acquired.
- An alternative suggestion involving mobile homes was discussed. Officers advised that this would require additional licensing and planning approvals and was not considered the preferred approach for reducing dependence on bed and breakfast accommodation.

RECOMMENDED that

1) all low cost housing receipts be used by the Council to increase the supply of temporary accommodation by purchasing suitable dwellings.

2) delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director Community and Housing Services following consultation with the Cabinet Member of Housing to purchase properties.

20/26

FIRST HOMES POLICY REVIEW

The First Homes Policy Review report was presented for Members' consideration by the Strategic Housing Services Manager.

Cabinet was advised that Government had introduced an affordable housing product known as First Homes to be provided by all local housing authorities from 28th March 2022. This required a minimum of twenty five per cent of affordable housing on Section 106 sites to be First Homes.

An update to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) guidance in 2024 offered an opportunity for this approach to be reviewed. The

removal of the mandatory requirement to deliver a minimum of twenty five per cent of affordable housing as First Homes would allow Strategic Housing to flexibly negotiate with developers regarding appropriate affordable housing products on site.

It was noted that this report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous evening.

RESOLVED that the Council's revised First Homes Policy be approved.

21/26

FINAL BROMSGROVE HOME CHOICE ALLOCATIONS POLICY APPROVAL

The Strategic Housing Services Manager presented this report for the consideration of Cabinet.

Members were advised that, as the local housing authority, the Council had a statutory duty to maintain an allocations scheme setting out how social housing would be allocated within the District. Following the end of a previous partnership arrangement with neighbouring authorities, Bromsgrove District Council was required to develop and adopt its own allocations policy.

Cabinet noted that approval had been granted in 2025 to undertake a six-week consultation on the draft Housing Allocations Policy, which commenced on 27th November 2025. Following the consultation exercise, amendments had been made to the policy to reflect feedback received.

Members were informed that the revised policy had also been reviewed by external legal advisers. The review had identified no significant concerns, although it had highlighted the importance of ensuring that the housing register remained accessible to all groups with protected characteristics where required. Cabinet's attention was drawn to the Equality Impact Assessment within the report.

RESOLVED that the final Bromsgrove Home Choice Housing Allocations Policy be approved.

22/26

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN SCENE SETTING REPORT 2027/28

The Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented the Medium Term Financial Plan Scene Setting Report for 2027/28.

Members were advised that this was the first in a series of reports that would be presented to Cabinet throughout the remainder of the financial year. The report established the starting position for the development of the 2027/28 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) covering the subsequent financial years leading up to Vesting Day under Local Government Reorganisation.

Cabinet noted the proposed timetable for consideration of the MTFP by both Cabinet and Council. The report also outlined the key assumptions underpinning the financial forecasts and identified a number of budget pressures that would need to be addressed as part of the financial planning process, which totalled approximately one million pounds.

Members were informed that the report highlighted a number of overarching financial risks and uncertainties that could impact the Council's financial position.

Cabinet also noted that the first stage of a budget review had been undertaken with senior officers to identify key service pressures, savings opportunities and areas requiring further consideration as part of the development of the MTFP.

In response to a question from Members regarding identified budget pressures and undelivered base budget efficiencies, officers clarified that the £927,000 pressure related to savings that had been identified in previous budget-setting exercises but had not been delivered in a manner that could be permanently incorporated into the Council's base budget. Officers explained that, whilst some savings had been achieved, these had often been delivered through measures such as vacancy management rather than through permanent reductions in expenditure. Although some of the efficiencies related to earlier financial years, including 2025/26, their impact remained relevant to the Council's financial position and had therefore been reflected as a budget pressure within the MTFP for 2027/28.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance commented that the report provided a clear baseline of the financial challenges facing the Council over the medium term. It was emphasised that the administration's approach to the budget-setting process would be underpinned by transparency, openness and robust governance, ensuring that Members were fully informed of the financial position and the decisions required throughout the process.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The budget process outlined in this report be followed for the 2027/28 annual budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan (2027/28 to 2030/31), subject to the impact of Local Government Reorganisation and vesting day on 1st April 2028.
- 2) The current pressures of £1.037 million be noted for consideration as part of the budget process for 2027/28.

23/26

TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2025/26

The Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented the Treasury Management Outturn Report for 2025/26.

Members were advised that the report provided an overview of the Council's treasury management activity during the previous financial year, including its cash flow position, borrowing arrangements and investment activities. The report also outlined the wider economic backdrop within which treasury management decisions had been undertaken.

Cabinet noted that the report reviewed performance against the Council's Prudential Indicators and detailed the level of borrowing held by the authority. Members were advised that all borrowing and treasury management activity had remained within the approved prudential limits throughout the year.

It was reported that officers were continuing to review the Council's overall cash flow position to ensure that appropriate arrangements remained in place to support the Council's financial resilience. Members were further advised that an updated Treasury Management Strategy and revised cash flow forecasts covering the next twelve months would be developed to support future treasury management decisions.

Members sought clarification regarding the fifteen million pound borrowing facility referred to in the report and whether borrowing had already been undertaken. Officers explained that, following a review of the Council's cash position towards the end of 2025/26, it had been determined that additional cash was required to manage short-term cash flow pressures. Consequently, borrowing of fifteen million pounds had been undertaken, comprising five million pounds on a short-term basis and a further ten million pounds over a twelve-month period.

Officers advised that the borrowing had been undertaken to support cash flow requirements rather than to address a structural budget deficit. Particular pressures arose at year-end when significant payments continued to be made whilst income from Council Tax collection was reduced.

A further query was raised regarding whether additional borrowing would be required during the current financial year. Officers advised that no additional borrowing was currently anticipated and that the ten million pound loan was scheduled for repayment in March 2027. However, this would be kept under review as part of a wider assessment of the Council's cash flow requirements.

The possibility of repaying the borrowing early was discussed, however officers explained that loans of this nature would generally be repaid on

their maturity date and that early repayment would typically incur financial penalties. This would however be investigated.

Members expressed concern regarding the level of borrowing and sought assurance about the Council's ability to repay the debt in March 2027. Officers reiterated that the borrowing related to cash flow management and not a lack of overall resources. It was noted that the timing of grant income, capital receipts and expenditure on large capital schemes could create temporary fluctuations in cash balances throughout the year.

Officers advised that further work was being undertaken, with support from treasury management advisers, to improve forecasting and provide a clearer understanding of the Council's future cash flow position. This would be reflected in future Treasury Management reports and the updated Treasury Management Strategy.

Members noted that the Council had historically operated without significant external borrowing.

The importance of understanding the timing of anticipated income, including capital receipts and other significant funding streams, when assessing the Council's future cash flow position was highlighted. Officers confirmed that these matters would form part of the ongoing review.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance commented that the report would be referred to Full Council for approval, reflecting the administration's commitment to transparency, accountability and appropriate Member oversight of the Council's financial affairs. Members were advised that, given the significance of treasury management activity and borrowing decisions, it was important that these matters were subject to detailed scrutiny and consideration by both Cabinet and Council.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1) the Council's Treasury performance for the financial year 25/26 be noted; and
- 2) the position in relation to the Council's Prudential indicators be noted.

24/26

QUARTER 4 FINANCIAL MONITORING AND OUTTURN REPORT 2025/26

The Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented the Quarter 4 Financial Monitoring and Outturn Report 2025/26.

Members were advised that the Council had recorded a small overspend of £5,000 against a net revenue budget of over fifteen point three million pounds. It was noted that this represented a position that was very close to a balanced budget.

It was explained that the financial position had shifted significantly since Quarter three. Two key items had contributed to this change. Firstly, staffing costs of approximately £750,000 had been charged to the capital programme at year-end. Secondly, a VAT correction of approximately £400,000 had been charged to service budgets. The impact of these two adjustments had resulted in the projected overspend reducing from around £300,000 at Quarter three to the final outturn overspend of £5,000.

Members' attention was drawn to a section of the report which detailed variances across individual service areas. Whilst the overall outturn position reflected only a small overspend, there were significant variances within individual service budgets. The report set out explanations for the major variances and outlined the impacts within each service area.

In relation to the capital programme, Members were informed that the Council had commenced the year with a capital budget of seventeen point four million pounds, including schemes carried forward from previous years. The capital programme had subsequently increased to twenty-one point nine million pounds during the year. Against this budget, significant expenditure had been incurred, with only a relatively small amount, approximately five million pounds, required to be carried forward into 2026/27.

Details of the Council's two major Levelling Up Fund schemes were highlighted. Members were advised that the Council continued to maintain a healthy reserves position. At the end of the financial year, earmarked reserves stood at just over fourteen million pounds, whilst the General Fund balance totalled thirteen point one five million pounds. It was noted that these reserve levels provided the Council with a strong degree of financial resilience and risk mitigation.

Members were informed that a review of earmarked reserves would be undertaken during the forthcoming financial year. In addition, a risk assessment of the General Fund balance would be completed to determine the most appropriate level of reserves required. Any resulting adjustments or recommendations would be reported to Council as necessary.

Reference was also made to the Council's collection performance for Council Tax and Business Rates. Members noted that collection rates at year-end were slightly above the national average for shire district councils. Whilst performance had fallen marginally short of the target set at the start of the year, the shortfall was reported to be only minor.

Members commented that the final position was encouraging and that the overspend was minimal.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance thanked the Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer for his presentation of the report and highlighted the enhanced level of financial information now being provided, including service-level outturn data, to improve transparency and understanding of financial performance across the Council.

Whilst endorsing the financial outturn figures presented, the Portfolio Holder for Finance explained that a revised governance approach was being proposed. Following advice from the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer, it was considered appropriate that key financial matters, including the revenue outturn, reserve movements and capital programme slippage, be referred to Full Council for approval. It was emphasised that the financial figures themselves were unchanged and that the proposal was intended to strengthen transparency, accountability and democratic oversight of significant financial decisions.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The updated procurement position set out in Appendix A to the minutes be noted, with any new items over £200k to be included on the forward plan.

RECOMMENDED that

- 2) The 2025/26 revenue outturn position is an overspend of £5,480 which will be funded by an allocation from General Fund Balance.
- 3) The General Fund Opening Balance of £13.382m will be reduced to £13.150m as a result of this overspend and the net transfer to Ward Budget Reserves previously agreed with members.
- 4) The 2025/26 capital outturn position is £16.943m spend against a total approved programme of £21.877m. The net balance of £4.934m will be carried forward and included within the 2026/27 capital programme.

- 5) The Ward Budget allocation for 2025/26 of £62,000 had approved allocations at £55,402 as at 31 March 2026, resulting in £6,598 which is transferred to General Fund reserves.
- 6) The balance of Earmarked Reserves as at 31 March 2026 is £14.169m.

25/26

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.

The meeting closed at 7.32 p.m.

Chairman

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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

16TH SEPTEMBER 2026, AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

PRESENT: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), S. J. Baxter (Deputy Leader),
S. T. Nock, K. Taylor and P. J. Whittaker (from Minute Item no.
28/26)

Observers: Councillor P. M. McDonald (Chairman of the Overview
and Scrutiny Board)

Officers: Mr J. Leach, Mr. J. Walton, Ms R. Egan, Ms J. Willis,
Mrs. H. Mole, Mr D. Riley, Ms. K. Sharp-Fisher and Mrs. J. Bayley-
Hill

26/26 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor S. Webb.

Members were advised that Councillor P. Whittaker would be arriving
late at the meeting.

27/26 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

28/26 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE CABINET HELD ON 22ND JULY 2026**

The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 22nd July 2026 were
submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 22nd July
2026 be approved as a true and correct record.

29/26 **HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY 2026**

The Private Sector Housing Manager presented the Housing Assistance
Policy for Members' consideration.

The Housing Assistance Policy detailed assistance that could be
provided by the Council to fund adaptations to properties. The particular
focus was on assisting residents with disabilities and there were
statutory duties to be met in respect of use of Disabled Facilities Grant
(DFG) funding. In addition, the Council was in a position to distribute a
number of discretionary grants to assist residents with their housing.

The policy had been developed jointly with colleagues at other Councils in Worcestershire. This would ensure a consistent approach was applied across the county. The application of the policy and use of grant funding would enable the Council to meet statutory duties in respect of keeping people in their homes and providing quality housing.

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

- The extent to which the recent pause on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) might impact on the policy. Officers confirmed that no impact was anticipated and that the co-ordinated approach across the county was simply designed to align processes.
- The approach to providing housing assistance that had been adopted in other parts of the country and whether any benchmarking had been undertaken to compare practices in Worcestershire to other areas. Cabinet was informed that benchmarking had not been undertaken, although it was suggested that this would be a useful exercise to undertake in the future.
- The adoption of an approach that aligned with national best practice and the fact that this was likely to compare favourably to some other counties.
- The level of flexibility available to Councils in respect of use of discretionary grant funding.
- The specific requirements that local authorities needed to meet when utilising DFGs to fund adaptations to properties.
- The sensitivities surrounding the use of DFG funding and the casework that this could generate for Councillors.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The Housing Assistance Policy be approved and adopted; and
- 2) Delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director of Community and Housing Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to agree any revisions to the Housing Assistance Policy and in line with any legislative or government guidance updates.

30/26

PROMOTION OF BUSINESS SUPPORT

The Assistant Director of Regeneration and Property Services presented a report on the subject of the promotion of business support.

Cabinet was advised that the report had been produced, following agreement of a Motion on Notice on this subject at a Council meeting held in February 2026. This Motion had requested that Cabinet consider producing a concise business prospectus.

Following that Council meeting, Officers had undertaken research on best practice in respect of provision of business support by local authorities and business growth hubs. During this work, Officers had found that it would be difficult to produce and keep up to date a paper copy of a business prospectus due to constant change occurring within this space. Consequently, Officers were not proposing a paper-based prospectus but instead that the information provided on the Council's website should be enhanced. It was further suggested that this should be extended in such a way that this could be expanded to neighbouring local authority areas if appropriate.

After the report had been presented, Members discussed a number of points in detail:

- The inclusion of economic development as one of the Council's priorities and the extent to which considerations about economic development were embedded in the work of services outside the Business Support team at the Council. Officers confirmed that there was more that could be done but cited existing work, including:
 - Links being developed with HOW College to offer work experience opportunities at the Council to students.
 - Exploration of social value and recruitment opportunities.
 - The impact of the Service Business Plans in place for each service and opportunities for services to work together to share ideas and deliver projects. There were Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in place to monitor performance in respect of these plans.
 - The progress that had been made in respect of holding appraisals at the Council, whereby close to 100 per cent of staff were receiving appraisals. As well as good practice supporting staff, this would enable key objectives and tasks to be filtered down to employees, including in respect of economic development, where appropriate.
- The links between the Planning and Economic Development departments at the Council and the potential for these links to be enhanced.
- The need for effective communications to be in place to raise awareness amongst businesses, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) about the support available both online and from the Worcestershire Growth Hub.
- The potential for Members to help raise awareness within their wards, using their networks, of the support available to businesses. Members requested that communications should be provided to enable Members to share information about business support using their local networks.
- The opportunity for a clear marketing and promotions strategy to be developed to support effective communications in respect of this matter.
- The role of the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in providing support to businesses.

- The extent to which LEPs would continue to receive Government funding moving forward and whether LGR might impact on the position of the LEPs.
- The impact that the Government's recent decision to pause further action on LGR might have on Council services and the knock-on implications for the Council's priority of economic development. Clarification was provided that senior officers were in the process of reviewing the potential implications for Council services including Council budgets.
- The lead officer support for the Worcestershire LEP and the extent to which senior officers from Bromsgrove District Council were in a position to attend these meetings.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The Council continue to develop and enhance its digital-first model for promotion of business support programmes available to businesses in the District; and
- 2) The Council continue to utilise Worcestershire Growth Hub as a central access point for business advice, support and opportunities.

31/26

QUARTER 1 2026/27 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Performance and Improvement Manager presented the performance monitoring report for the first quarter of 2026/27.

The report detailed the performance of Council services during the quarter. Strong results had been recorded for a range of services, including Planning, Environmental Services and in respect of workforce measures. Recycling performance had improved during the period and Building Control had recorded 100 per cent performance in respect of statutory requirements. The Bromsgrove Community Investment Fund had attracted a lot of applications. Staff turnover compared favourably with the national average.

There were also areas of performance that were being monitored. This included fly tipping rates and temporary accommodation.

In terms of community safety, performance in respect of crime statistics was broadly consistent. However, provision of data to the Council in respect of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) had been delayed.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed a number of points:

- The potential impact on fly tipping rates of Worcestershire County Council's decision to no longer accept fridges and freezers from bulky waste collections. It was noted that the Environmental Services team had already been asked to monitor the potential impact on fly tipping.

- The reasons why Worcestershire County Council had chosen to no longer accept fridges and freezers. Members noted that this approach was consistent with many County Councils across the country and a consequence of rising costs for the disposal of fridges and freezers.
- The extent to which performance in respect of planning enforcement data had been impacted by the new approach adopted by Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS).
- The impact that the Covid-19 pandemic might have had on fly tipping rates and the extent to which this was still have an impact six years after the pandemic first emerged.
- The inclusion of RAG ratings in the report. Members welcomed references to “red”, “amber” and “green”, as applicable, within the report as this helped to clarify the ratings in black and white paper copies of the agenda pack.
- The hard work of the Business Improvement Team, particularly the Performance and Improvement Lead, on the preparation of the report. Members thanked the team for their hard work.

During consideration of this item, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board addressed Cabinet on behalf of the Finance and Budget Working Group (FBWG). Members were informed that at a recent meeting of the group the performance monitoring report had been scrutinised. There had been general consensus amongst Members of the group that this was a good report and that Council services were performing well.

RESOLVED that the overview of Quarter 1 performance for the period April to June 2026 against the Council Plan priorities be noted.

32/26

BDC EQUALITY STRATEGY 2026-2028 (INCLUDING ENGAGEMENT POLICY)

The Improvement and Performance Manager presented the Equalities Strategy (including Engagement Policy) 2026/28 for Cabinet's consideration.

The Equality Strategy provided a framework at the Council for equalities and inclusion and brought together activities from across the authority. The content extended beyond the aspirations of the previous strategy and would influence a range of key projects and activities. Within the strategy, an Equality Action Plan had been developed containing key objectives. Progress in respect of this action plan would be monitored.

The Engagement Policy detailed the Council's approach to engaging with local residents and service users.

Members discussed the content of the strategy and policy. In doing so, it was noted that the previous strategy had applied for a four year period whilst it was proposed that the draft strategy should apply for two years, from 2026 to 2028. Questions were raised as to whether these

timeframes had been influenced by the original timetable for LGR. Officers confirmed that this had been taken into account when the timeframes were considered.

Consideration was subsequently given to the potential to extend the timeframes covered by the strategy up to 2030. Clarification was provided that whilst there was a pause on LGR, the Council was reviewing the implications of this for Council services and budgets. However, confirmation was provided that extending the timeframes of the strategy would not require significant extra work or expenditure. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that the timeframes could be revisited at a later date, depending on the Government's future announcement on LGR for Worcestershire.

In this context, Members proposed to amend the timeframes of the strategy to apply from 2026 to 2030. To ensure consistency, Cabinet further proposed that the timeframes for the Engagement Policy should also be extended to cover the period 2026 to 2030.

RECOMMENDED that the Equality Strategy 2026 – 2030 (including the Engagement Policy 2026 - 2030) be approved.

33/26

DISCRETIONARY COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION POLICY 2026/27

The Revenue Support Manager presented the Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Policy 2026/27.

Cabinet was advised that the authority reviewed the content of the Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Policy on an annual basis. The Council had discretionary powers to amend or reduce Council Tax, including through assessment on a case-by-case basis. Decisions on Council Tax reduction were subject to a review process and tax payers could appeal decisions if they disagreed with the decision made by the authority.

The Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Policy needed to support speedy and transparent decision-making. In addition, Tribunals expected Councils to have a policy for discretionary Council Tax reductions.

Within the Council's existing Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Policy there were four criteria:

- Reductions for care leavers aged 25 or under. Worcestershire County Council worked with the authority to help clarify eligible candidates.
- The flood recovery framework, which applied to householders that had been impacted by a flooding incident.
- Any other Government additional support.
- Other cases, which were assessed on a case-by-case basis under exceptional hardship arrangements.

In the updated policy, an additional category was proposed in respect of Council Tax reductions for households in which there was a resident who was terminally ill. This additional category had been proposed following receipt of communications from charities that supported people who were terminally ill and their carers. Previously, the position of residents who were terminally ill had been considered in relation to exceptional hardship arrangements.

In considering the proposed new category, Members were asked to note that this reduction would not apply to every household in which there was a resident who was terminally ill. Before a decision would be taken, the Council would consider the financial income for the household. There would be a need to achieve a balance in decision-making between providing appropriate levels of financial support and meeting the authority's duty of care.

Consideration had originally been given to amending the policy in this manner in January 2026. However, Officers had been asked to research practices in other parts of the country before taking this forward. Subsequently, Officers had established that none of the Councils in South Worcestershire had included this category in their Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Policies and neither had Wyre Forest District Council. All of these authorities assessed Council Tax reductions in relation to hardship arrangements when supporting terminally ill residents. There were some larger local authorities, including Manchester City Council and Bristol City Council that had already introduced this category alongside Redditch Borough Council and different approaches had been adopted at these authorities. During consideration of this item, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board advised that the report had been scrutinised at a meeting of the Finance and Budget Working Group. During this meeting, there had been two distinct views that had been raised by Members:

- Some Members had argued that if a resident was terminally ill the evidence of that illness should be sufficient for that resident to be eligible for discretionary Council Tax reduction without means testing.
- Other Members had commented that there should be targeted support for terminally ill residents. In this scenario, terminally ill residents in receipt of personal income above a certain threshold should not be eligible to receive Council Tax reduction.

No consensus had been reached at the meeting of the Finance and Budget Working Group on a preferred way forward and therefore no recommendations had been made to the Cabinet on this subject.

Members subsequently discussed the following matters in detail:

- The extent to which the Council's current policy provided sufficient flexibility to apply Council Tax reductions for terminally ill residents.

Clarification was provided that limited support could be provided under exceptional hardship arrangements.

- The approach that would be adopted under the proposed new policy and whether residents' income would be taken into account. Officers confirmed that residents' incomes would be taken into account when assessments were undertaken.
- The position of homeowners who lived alone who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and how their eligibility would be assessed. Cabinet was advised that a compassionate approach would be adopted and, where appropriate, recovery of debts could be deferred until after the residents' death, to be obtained from their estate.
- The extent to which terminally ill residents and their carers were likely to be aware of or to think about applying for discretionary Council Tax reduction. Members commented on personal experiences in which many such considerations were unlikely to have been their focus at the time of a loved one's diagnosis. The suggestion was made that instead, information about the availability of support should be shared with palliative care teams and hospices, which could then assist residents and their carers.
- The decision-making process that would apply in determining eligibility. Confirmation was provided that Officers would gather evidence and would make the decisions in line with a framework. Cabinet was informed that the first stage of appeal would be referred to an officer. A second appeal stage would involve referral of the case to an evaluation tribunal.
- The extent to which residents would be liaising with Officers in person or by phone, rather than the Council using artificial intelligence. Officers confirmed that staff would liaise directly with residents.
- The extent to which there was a risk of legal action being taken by the Council to recover Council Tax debts whilst a resident was experiencing terminal illness. Members were assured that the Council would continue to adopt a compassionate approach to debt recovery and that the authority did not take court action against terminally ill residents.
- The fact that the proposed changes reflected best practice and the likelihood that other Councils would adopt similar arrangements in future.
- The annual reviews of the Discretionary Council Tax Reduction Policy that would continue to take place and the potential for amendments to be made to the policy as further information emerged about best practice across the country.
- The extent to which it was likely that a future Unitary Authority would adopt a similar approach. Cabinet was informed that the Members of the future Unitary Authority would need to determine their own policies.
- The potential for the financial impact of this policy in relation to all precepting authorities to be explored at a meeting of Worcestershire Leaders' Board.

RECOMMENDED that the revised section 13A(1)(C) policy be approved and adopted.

34/26

**RECOMMENDATION FROM THE SHAREHOLDERS COMMITTEE -
APPOINTMENT OF SHAREHOLDERS COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE**

Members considered a report detailing a referral that had been received from the Shareholders Committee proposing that the Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services should be appointed as the Shareholders Committee representative.

Cabinet was informed that there was a shareholders agreement between Spadesbourne Homes Limited and the Council. This agreement permitted the appointment of a Council officer as a lead liaison with Spadesbourne Homes Limited. The Shareholders Committee had considered a report on this subject at their latest meeting held in July 2026 and had agreed that the Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services would be suitable for this role. However, as a decision on this subject was outside the Committee's remit, a recommendation on this subject had been referred to Cabinet for consideration.

RESOLVED that Simon Parry, Assistant Director of Environmental and Housing Property Services be appointed as Shareholder Committee Representative.

35/26

QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT 2026/27

The Chief Finance Officer presented the financial monitoring report for quarter 1 of the 2026/27 financial year.

Members were informed that by the end of quarter 1, the Council was projecting a small overspend. Variances per service area had been recorded in the report alongside comparable data for the 2025/26 outturn budget. Some overspends had been identified. There were also some areas, particularly corporate services such as Council Tax, where it was not possible at such an early stage to assess levels of variance. Where possible, variances were in the process of being reviewed in time to inform the quarter 2 financial monitoring report.

The capital programme had been reviewed as part of the monitoring process. As the Council was at an early stage in the financial year, the level of spend had been included but no breakdown had been provided. Further information would be made available in subsequent monitoring reports.

The Council had healthy balances. The income from VAT returns had been incorporated into the general balances.

Following the presentation of the report, Members discussed the potential for financial information for Planning and Leisure Services to be presented separately in future, in line with different portfolio responsibilities. Clarification was provided that work was being undertaken to enable Members to review financial data by service and portfolio. However, this presentation format would be available later in the year. Cabinet was also asked to note that some service directorates did not match Portfolio Holder remits.

During consideration of this report, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board advised that the report had been considered at the latest meeting of the Finance and Budget Working Group. At that meeting of the group, Members had welcomed the new format of the report which had been viewed as an improvement on previous iterations. There had been some areas which the group had noted in particular, and these were highlighted for Cabinet's consideration:

- The £90,000 overspend that had been recorded for homelessness. The group had questioned why this had arisen following an increase in funding for homelessness services earlier in the year and the Section 151 Officer had undertaken to investigate the matter further.
- The saving of £40,000 that had been recorded for Churchfields Car Park. Members had questioned why there was a saving associated with this car park, given it had been closed for a number of years. Officers had agreed to investigate this matter further.
- The decreasing number of temporary agency staff employed by the local authority, which had been welcomed by the group.
- The different approach that had been adopted in 2026/27 compared to 2025/26 in respect of the capitalisation of salary costs.

RESOLVED

- 1) To note that the full year forecast revenue position for 2026/27 was an overspend of £0.021 million which would be funded by the General Fund Balance at year end if the position remained as an overspend;
- 2) To note that the 2026/27 actual capital position at Quarter 1 was £1.953 million spend against a total approved programme of £13.692 million;
- 3) The Ward Budget allocation for 2026/27 of £155,000 had approved allocations at £20,318 as at 30th June 2026;
- 4) The General Fund Opening Balance of £11.676 million adjusted in year to £11.543 million as a result of the overspend and other adjustments;
- 5) The balance of Earmarked Reserves as at 30 June 2026 was £14.110 million; and

- 6) There was an updated procurement position, with any new items over £200k to be included on the forward plan.

36/26

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 21ST JULY 2026

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 21st July 2026 were submitted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 21st July 2026 be noted.

37/26

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 for consideration on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 7.42 p.m.

Chairman

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