

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE CABINET**

**MONDAY 20TH APRIL 2026, AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), S. J. Baxter (Deputy Leader),  
S. T. Nock, K. Taylor, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

Observers: Councillor P. M. McDonald - Chairman of the Overview  
and Scrutiny Board  
Councillor J.W. Robinson

Officers: Mr J. Leach, Mr. J. Walton, Mrs. D. Goodall, Mrs.  
R. Egan, Mr. M. Cox, Mr. M. Bough, Ms. T. Ainscough,  
Ms. M. Bailey, Mrs. H. Mole, Mr. M Eccles, Ms. G. Harris, Miss. K.  
Sharp-Fisher and Mrs J. Gresham

94/25 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

95/25 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

96/25 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
OF THE CABINET HELD ON 25TH MARCH 2026**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 25th March 2026 were  
submitted for Members' consideration.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 25th March  
2026 be approved as a true and accurate record.

97/25 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
BOARD HELD ON 24TH MARCH 2026**

The Leader took the opportunity to welcome the newly appointed  
Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer to Bromsgrove District  
Council.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was invited to  
present the minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held

on 24th March 2026. In doing so it was noted that there were no outstanding recommendations from this meeting. However, a number of Cabinet reports had been pre-scrutinised at the Board meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2026 and at the two Finance and Budget Scrutiny Meetings held on 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> April 2026. Any recommendations made as a result of this pre-scrutiny would be discussed during consideration of the reports at this meeting.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 24th March 2026 be noted.

98/25

### **REVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME ENFORCEMENT POLICY**

The Principal Officer (Planning & Enviro- Crime Enforcement) from Worcestershire regulatory Services (WRS) presented the Revision of Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy for Members' consideration.

Cabinet Members were advised that this was an updated policy which adhered to the most up to date legislation. This policy aimed to reflect the most current working practices in enforcement.

The updated policy was welcomed by Members and expressed that it would lead to better compliance in the disposal of waste within the District. However, it was also felt that when the policy was launched there needed to be a communications strategy that ran alongside. This would help support the policy, particularly in respect of the emphasis on the public's responsibility for waste until it was removed. Members felt it would be appropriate for the communications to include information regarding residents who were disposing of waste through a third party, and the importance of requesting sight of a disposal license to ensure the waste would be disposed of legally and responsibly.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Bromsgrove and Redditch Enforcement Policy be adopted and replace the current Joint Environmental Enforcement.

99/25

### **INTRODUCTION OF ENFORCEMENT OF LITTERING FROM VEHICLES**

The Principal Officer (Planning & Enviro- Crime Enforcement) from Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented the Introduction of Enforcement of Littering from Vehicles for Members' consideration.

In doing so it was noted that this policy enabled littering from vehicles to be tackled through civil enforcement in the future. This would help to

assist in dealing with this matter, which was problematic, particularly in rural areas of the District. If the policy was approved, it was considered a reactive and proactive response and would enable the Civil Enforcement Team to issue Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) to the Registered Keeper of the vehicle from which the litter was thrown. It was noted that this would result in an additional resource in the tackling of litter within the District.

In terms of the PCN level, it was stated that this would be £250 and £125 (for prompt payment).

Members felt that along with the introduction of this type of enforcement, it was important to communicate a robust anti-littering message to residents. This would ensure that residents were aware if a littering offence was committed from a vehicle, and that the Registered Keeper was responsible for the PCN. It was also requested that the communications should remind residents of the risk to Council staff in carrying out increased litter picks as part of their role and as a result of littering.

Councillor J. Robinson, who was in attendance at this meeting, queried whether there would be a targeted approach to this enforcement and how evidence would be gathered. Officers confirmed that this would not be targeted but would rely on the Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) witnessing the offence and obtaining video evidence on their body worn camera equipment. The PCN would be issued by administrative staff when the CEO returned to the office, in much the same way as a parking PCN was issued.

The right to appeal was also queried, particularly as the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) might not have the most up to date information on the Registered Keeper of a vehicle, or if the registration license plate was incorrect. This might result in letters being received from an enforcement agency to the incorrect person or address. Officers explained that there would be very few instances when this would happen, however there would be the opportunity for review in some cases.

In terms of whether this would only be applicable to vehicles registered within the UK, it was confirmed that this was the case as it would be difficult to enforce for vehicles from outside the UK.

Members queried whether there would be additional training provided to CEOs to carry out these additional duties. It was noted that CEOs were already trained to carry out enforcement as part of their role. As

Members were aware, Wychavon District Council provided parking enforcement for the Council and CEOs already carried out this type of littering enforcement in Wychavon and therefore the training would be easily applied within Bromsgrove. Officers explained that there had been five littering PCNs issued by Wychavon District Council in 2025.

On being put to the vote it was

**RECOMMENDED** that

- 1) Civil enforcement of Littering from Vehicles be introduced;
- 2) The Civil Enforcement Team be given delegated authority to issue Litter Penalty Charge Notices;
- 3) The parking administration team be authorised to deal with appeals and enforcement matters in respect of Litter Penalty Charge Notices;
- 4) The Penalty Notice Charge be set at the level set by Council for Criminal offences where a Fixed Penalty Notice is served for Depositing Litter (section 87/88 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990) which for 2026/27 subject to Council approval are proposed to be set as:
  - a) £250; and
  - b) £125 for prompt payment (within 14 days); and
- 5) Authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Regeneration & Property to issue Penalty Notice Charges for Littering from Vehicles under The Littering From Vehicles Outside London (Keepers: Civil Penalties) Regulations 2018.

100/25

**COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUND**

The UK Prosperity Fund Manager presented the Community Investment Fund report. In doing so it was noted that on 25th February 2026, the Council resolved to create a reserve of £1.25 million for a Community Investment Fund to enable agile investments to meet local community needs. In addition to this, an uplift in respect of Members' Ward Budgets from £2,000 to £5,000 and therefore £93,000 of this reserve was allocated to accommodate this increase.

The process for the allocation of funding for projects would be competitive, and applications evaluated against the assessment criteria in the policy and a scoring matrix based on these criteria applied. A panel of at least three officers would independently assess each application, followed by a moderation process to review and align scores. The resulting list of proposed decisions would be reviewed by the Assistant Director Regeneration and Property Services who would make recommendations to the Executive Director Environment and Communities. The Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Strategic Housing would then be consulted on the recommended decisions before applicants were informed of the outcome.

The final recommendation contained within the report was in respect of funding for 0.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) for a post to administer the funding.

The Leader explained that this report had been pre-scrutinised by the Finance and Budget Working Group at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2026 where some recommendations were made and ratified at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board at its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2026. The recommendations were as follows:

- 1) Regarding Bromsgrove District Departments – any projects put forward must have the approval of the Ward Member.
- 2) Bromsgrove District Departments help and assist Ward Members with any projects they may put forward.
- 3) That the Panel should be Cross-Party.
- 4) If Ward Members feel they cannot sponsor a project, then it cannot go ahead.
- 5) Consideration should be given to an appeal process.

These recommendations were discussed in detail. It was stated that applications for this funding must be in line with Council Priorities. In terms of Council departments applying for funding this was not an opportunity for any service area who had not applied for a Budget Bid to apply for funding. The process of approval was clear within the funding criteria and with an Officer panel evaluating the applications, this would ensure that the funding would be available more quickly and the process less bureaucratic. There had been funding rounds undertaken previously, such as the New Homes Bonus, which had been long and protracted and taken up a considerable amount of Member time and Officer resource. The Leader confirmed that both she and / or the

Deputy Leader would remove themselves from considering any projects that might be a conflict of interest for them. This was the advantage of both Members being consulted as part of the application process.

In respect of recommendations 1 and 4 above, it was confirmed that Ward Members would be consulted as part of the application process. Ward Members would need to provide confirmation that they were in support of a project within their Ward. Where a Ward Member was not in support of a project, they would need to provide a clear rationale, as to the reasons why they did not support the project, especially where it related to a Council priority. This would be taken into account as part of the evaluation process. It was agreed that it was the responsibility of the applicant to provide further details to the Ward Member if they were not initially supportive of the project. Alternative wording was proposed for recommendation 1 as detailed below:

*‘Any project proposal that had potential implications for a ward must include feedback from the Ward Member and be provided for consideration by the Executive Director Environment and Communities following consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Strategic Housing and Assistant Director Regeneration and Property.’*

The Chairman of the Board expressed that he required more surety around the proposed wording and requested that the word ‘feedback’ be replaced with ‘confirmation’. This request was accepted.

There was a discussion regarding recommendation 2 above regarding support from Bromsgrove District departments. Members were informed that technical support via initially the Assistant Director would be made available to advise as appropriate whilst recognising council officers would not be leading on bids from communities. An amendment to the wording was suggested as follows:

*‘Support Ward Members to fulfil their community leadership role in working with the communities by accessing any appropriate technical support via Assistant Directors in the first instance, whilst ensuring bids were owned and developed by Ward Members and their communities.’*

The Chairman of the Board accepted this amendment.

The recommendation regarding a cross-party panel was noted. It was confirmed that it was not intended to create a Member panel or

committee at this time for determination of Community Investment Funding.

Whilst an appeal process was not supported at this time, a rationale would be provided by the Executive Director for Environment and Communities for any decisions made regarding bids, following consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Strategic Housing in liaison with the Assistant Director for Regeneration and Property Services.

Members queried the 0.5 FTE allocation to the administering of the fund. The Overview and Scrutiny Board had understood that this would be divided between Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils resulting in 0.25 FTE for each Council. It was clarified that the post would be 0.5 FTE at each Council and not 0.25 FTE. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was pleased that this was the case.

As there were three rounds of funding available, Members felt it was prudent to undertake the first round of funding, which was due to start imminently. It was determined that following the first round, which would be monitored closely, a review of the process took place to accommodate any lessons learnt and make any amendments to the process if necessary. It was reiterated that this process involved ownership by the Ward Member and communities and it was not for the Council to undertake all the work.

**RESOLVED that**

- 1) The Community Investment Fund policy be approved;
- 2) Recommendations in relation to the Community Investment Fund to be received from the Assistant Director Regeneration and Property with delegated authority for spend, upon receipt of those recommendations, to be granted to the Executive Director Environment and Communities following consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Strategic Housing;
- 3) £93,000 of the Community Investment Fund be allocated to Members' Ward Budgets;

- 4) Up to £43,792 of the Community Investment Fund be allocated to the cost of administering the fund;
- 5) Any project proposal that had potential implications for a ward must include confirmation from the Ward Member and be provided for consideration by the Executive Director Environment and Communities following consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Strategic Housing and Assistant Director Regeneration and Property;
- 6) Ward Members were supported to fulfil their community leadership role in working with the communities by accessing any appropriate technical support via Assistant Directors in the first instance, whilst ensuring bids were owned and developed by Ward Members and their communities;
- 7) Where a project does not receive the support of a Ward Member this would be taken into account as part of the evaluation process;
- 8) A rationale would be provided by the Executive Director Environment and Communities for any decisions regarding bids, following consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Strategic Housing in liaison with the Assistant Director Regeneration and Property; and
- 9) A review of the process of the Community Investment Fund be undertaken following the completion of the first round of funding.

101/25

### **CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2026 TO 2031**

The Climate Change Manager presented the Climate Change Strategy 2026 to 2031. In doing so, the following was highlighted:

- The Climate Change Strategy 2026 to 2031 replaced the previously approved Strategy. The new Strategy focused on priority themes where the Council had direct control or significant influence such as:

- Buildings within the Council's Estate
  - Residential Buildings
  - Transport
  - Planning and Land Use
  - Biodiversity
  - Waste and Food
  - Collaboration and Engagement
  - Governance and Finance
- 
- The Strategy would be embedded in the Council's performance framework with annual reporting to Cabinet and Council. Members were reminded that Climate Change implications were already included in all Committee reports.
  - In order to ensure the Strategy moved from high-level ambition to operational reality, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) actions and milestones would be included directly in the relevant Service Business Plans. It was hoped that this would ensure that Assistant Directors and Service Managers maintained full ownership over the delivery methods required to meet the Climate Change Strategy outcomes.
  - The Climate Change Manager would act as the central corporate auditor, responsible for the annual monitoring and reporting of these milestones to Cabinet and Council. Members noted that although the Climate Change Manager would be the auditor, it was the responsibility of all Service areas to embed and take ownership of policies and processes in respect of Climate Change within their Service Area.
  - Partnerships would be instrumental in delivering the Strategy. There would be continued collaboration with Worcestershire County Council, Everyone Active, BDHT/Registered Providers, Act On Energy, Midland Net Zero Hub, Worcestershire Regulatory Services, in order to maximise delivery capacity and funding leverage.
  - There were some key operational programmes that would be undertaken which included:
    - PV at Bromsgrove Sport and Leisure Centre
    - Lighting upgrades across the Council's estate
    - Warm Homes retrofit
    - Expansion of EV charging
    - Preparation for separate weekly food waste collections
    - Biodiversity improvements

- The Strategy would be delivered through a mix of existing revenue budgets, invest-to-save business cases, Capital Programme bids, and external funding as required by service areas.
- Within the context of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), this was an adaptable Strategy which had been prepared and could be passed over to the new Authority in whatever structure was adopted.
- An annual report would be provided to ascertain the status of milestones and actions within the Strategy.

Members welcomed the ambitious Strategy and requested that areas of commonality between neighbouring Districts be considered during the implementation of the Climate Change Strategy 2026 to 2031 particularly in light of LGR.

It was raised that the previous Carbon Reduction Action Plan had set out the pathway to Net Zero by 2040 for the Council's own operations, with a 50 per cent reduction by 2030. Given that the Council would no longer be operating in its current form in 2030, what would be the Council's reduction in its operation in May 2028, when the new unitary authority would be established? It was noted that currently the Council's operations were successfully moving towards the 50 per cent reduction and were already close to attaining this result. The exact reduction in 2028 was not recorded within the report, however Officers looked to provide this information as part of the annual update of the Strategy reported to Council.

Further clarification was requested on whether the District would be establishing an anaerobic digester in the future. It was noted that a definitive answer could not be provided on this matter. An anaerobic digester would come at a considerable expense to the Council and require significant capacity. Both Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils were committed to providing a Food Waste Collection service in October 2026 in line with legislation. However, Members were keen to understand what the journey was for the neighbouring Councils in terms of food waste. It seemed that not all Councils would be operating a food waste collection service within the Government guidelines and it was queried why this was the case. Officers would provide updates on these areas as part of the annual updates.

It was noted that as the previous Cabinet Member for Climate Change had been consulted as part of the completion of the Strategy. The contents of the Strategy would not be amended to reflect the change in

portfolio responsibly and that she would present the report when it was considered at Full Council in the new municipal year.

**RECOMMENDED** that

- 1) The Council's Climate Change Strategy 2026–2031 be approved; and
- 2) an annual review of the Climate Change Strategy be reported to Council.

102/25

### **EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY**

The Senior Strategic Housing Officer presented the Empty Homes Strategy for Members' consideration.

It was reported that according to the national council tax database for 2025, there were 542,276 empty homes recorded in October across England, representing 2.1 per cent of all homes. In October 2025, Bromsgrove District had 635 empty homes, of which 384 had been empty for more than 6 months.

The Council was committed to identifying empty homes and developing options for bringing them back into use as quickly as possible.

Cabinet was informed that the aim of the Strategy was to:

- help alleviate housing need
- improve housing conditions
- offer a wider choice of housing to residents
- minimise the blight that can result where properties are left empty and neglected.

The strategic approach to tackling empty homes and delivering on the Council's commitment, was centred around three priority areas:

- Priority 1 - Develop systems, processes and multi-agency working
- Priority 2 - Improve intervention pathways, resources and performance
- Priority 3 - Strengthen early intervention, engagement and monitoring

It was explained that an empty home was a dwelling which was unoccupied and substantially unfurnished. There were two main types of

empty homes. Short term empty homes were dwellings which had been unoccupied for under six months. It was often the case that these were in the process of sale. Short term empty homes naturally occurred as people's circumstances changed, and they moved between homes.

Long term empty homes were dwellings which had been unoccupied and were substantially unfurnished for six months or longer. Bringing long term, privately owned empty homes back into use was the focus of this Strategy. Rather than representing a natural process of change, long term empty homes indicated there may be other factors leading to a property remaining empty.

Residential properties remained empty for various reasons, for example resolving legal ownership as part of an inheritance process. Other factors included new homes waiting for a buyer, owners abandoning properties and owners having a lack of funds for repairs and refurbishment.

There was no Act of Parliament that created a duty on local housing authorities to tackle empty homes. However, Councils did have a general housing duty to review housing conditions and needs as defined in the Housing Act 1985.

National policy focused on empowering Local Authorities to bring vacant dwellings back in to use, guided by a local empty homes strategy. Local Authorities had the discretion to charge empty homeowners council tax premiums and had a range of legislative powers to tackle empty homes.

A contribution of £7,680 from Bromsgrove District Council's Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant (26/27) had been agreed to support the funding of the part-time Empty Homes Officer.

Members welcomed this important Strategy and thanked the Senior Strategic Housing Officer for the comprehensive report.

Members questioned whether this process would be undertaken quickly in terms of getting empty homes back on the open market. Officers explained that this would be the responsibility of the Private Sector Housing Team to manage this process as quickly and effectively as possible. It was reported that since November 2025, five long term empty homes had been released on the open market, which was a great result for the District.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Bromsgrove District Council Empty Homes Strategy 2026 – 29 be adopted.

103/25

**RENTERS RIGHTS ACT 2025**

The Private Sector Housing Manager presented the Renters Rights Act 2025 report.

In doing so it was noted that The Renters Rights Act 2025 (RRA25) obtained Royal Assent in October 2025 with reforms being introduced through a phased approach.

Phase 1 would take effect from 1st May 2026 and included the following elements:

- The abolition of Section 21 'no fault' evictions.
- The introduction of Assured Periodic Tenancies in the private rented sector.
- The reform of possession grounds in the Private Rent Sector (PRS) so they are fair for both parties.
- The limitation of rent increases to once a year.
- Ban rental bidding and rent in advance.
- It would be illegal to discriminate against renters who had children or received benefits.
- Required landlords in the (PRS) to consider tenant requests to rent with a pet.
- Strengthen both local council enforcement and rent repayment orders.

Members were informed that Phase 2 would take effect from late 2026 and included the following elements across two stages:

- 1) Stage 1 the regional rollout of the database for Landlords and Local Councils. Signing up to the PRS Database would be mandatory for all PRS landlords and they would be required to pay an annual fee, the amount of which was still to be confirmed.
- 2) Stage 2 involved the further roll out of the database and introduction of the Ombudsman.

Phase 3 involved the introduction of a new Decent Homes Standard (DHS) in the PRS. It was reported that the dates of implementation were still to be confirmed following consultation, but it was likely to start in 2035.

In addition to these measures, the Government had consulted on plans to require all domestic privately rented properties in England and Wales to meet Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C or equivalent by 2030 unless a valid exemption was in place. Awaab's Law would also be extended to the PRS, this dealt with mould and damp in properties and required landlords to make housing safe where they contained serious hazards.

New Burdens Funding 2025/26 had been provided by Government to support Local Authorities with the implementation costs. It was reported that Bromsgrove District Council had been allocated £16,575.66 to support the Council to undertake preparatory work for the new responsibilities around enforcement and reporting enforcement activity in private rented sector housing arising from the Renters' Rights Act 2025. In addition to this, Government had also confirmed that £34,332 for 2026/27 and £16,165 for 2027/28 had been added to the Council's final allocation of the Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant 2026-29.

Following the presentation of the report, Members queried what the current EPC rating must be in the PRS. It was reported that currently rental properties could not be an F rating or below, however, it was confirmed that there were not many properties at this rating within the District.

It was hoped that this legislation would succeed in doing what it was intended to do by Government. However, there were some reservations that it could reduce the numbers of rental properties available and increase homelessness across the District in the long term.

Members requested that a review be undertaken in six months to see the effects of the legislation and ascertain the impact on the District.

**RESOLVED** that

- 1) The update provided in the report in respect of the Renters Rights Act 2025 be noted;
- 2) The new burdens funding of £16,575.66 be noted; and

- 3) A review be undertaken in six months to see the effects of the Renters Rights Act 2025 legislation and ascertain the impact on the District.

**RECOMMENDED** that

- 4) The Scheme of Delegations be amended to incorporate new powers under the Renters Rights Act 2025.

104/25

**QUARTER 3 2025/26 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT (INCLUDING FINANCIAL SAVINGS)**

The Assistant Director Finance and Customer Services presented the Quarter Three 2025/26 Finance and Performance Monitoring Report (including Financial Savings) for the consideration of Cabinet, which covered the period April to December 2025.

The report provided an update on the Council's forecast revenue and capital outturn, savings delivery, reserves, treasury management, and key performance information.

At Quarter Three, the Council was forecasting a £314,000 revenue overspend for the full year. This represented a broadly stable position compared with previous forecasts and reflected ongoing financial management actions taken during the year.

The overall position included the impact of both service-level pressures and favourable movements within corporate financing.

The key message was that the position remained manageable, but there were material service pressures that continued to require close monitoring into Quarter Four and beyond.

In terms of revenue pressures and underspends the most significant overspend was within Environmental Services, currently forecast at £884,000. This was mainly driven by waste management pressures linked to the ageing vehicle fleet, higher maintenance and hire costs, and the use of agency staff to cover vacancies and sickness. These pressures were expected to reduce once the new fleet was fully introduced.

Finance and Customer Services was forecasting a £674,000 overspend. This primarily related to agency staffing costs to cover vacancies, specialist VAT support and insurance property valuation work required

for the Statement of Accounts, alongside a housing benefit subsidy budget realignment. A review of resourcing arrangements was ongoing.

The overspends were largely offset by significant underspends elsewhere. Corporate Services was forecasting an £864,000 underspend due mainly to vacancy management, corporate efficiencies, and lower-than-expected inflation and utility costs. Corporate Financing was also showing a £970k underspend, driven by higher investment interest income, savings on interest payable, and the recognition of revenue grants received in advance in the previous financial year.

The Council had a savings target of £1.213m for 2025/26. As of Quarter Three, savings of £1.457m had been delivered, exceeding the target by approximately £244,000. The majority of savings had been achieved through vacancy management and corporate efficiencies. Further work was underway to review vacant posts and ensure that these savings were sustainable into future years.

Capital expenditure to date totalled £13.593m against a revised capital budget of £21.876m, which included additional grants received and carry forwards from previous years.

Key schemes included Nailers' Yard, where construction was progressing with a revised completion date of 6<sup>th</sup> May 2026, and the Windsor Street site, where remediation works were continuing to prepare the site for redevelopment.

Public Realm works had been completed and were reporting a notable underspend.

While delivery continued, there might be short-term cashflow implications pending the receipt of some external grant funding.

At the end of Quarter Three, earmarked reserves stood at £11.266m and were forecast to rise to £12.245m by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. This remained consistent with the approved Medium-Term Financial Plan and provided a reasonable level of resilience to manage known risks and future pressures.

The Council continued to operate without external borrowing. At the end of December 2025, £6m was held in short-term investments. Treasury activity remained fully compliant with approved prudential indicators, and returns had benefited from the higher interest rate environment.

Council Tax and Business Rates collection performance remained strong and was close to or above national averages. Benefits processing times had improved during the year, despite increased complexity in cases retained by the Council. Overall, corporate performance indicators were broadly on track at Quarter Three.

Following the presentation of the report, there were several areas discussed in detail. These included the consideration of this report at a Finance and Budget Working Group meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> April. There had been several actions as a result of this pre-scrutiny including:

- Further information in respect of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) funding which was due to be received by the Council.
- Information on the costs of temporary accommodation. There had been a request made that the Assistant Director for Communities and Housing Services be invited to a meeting of the FBWG in the new municipal year.
- Funding for potholes at the Aston Road roundabout. This was an unadopted roundabout, maintained by the Council, which needed to be repaired if it was to be adopted in the future.
- Further information on the £64,000 pressure from North Worcestershire Water Management (NWWM). Cabinet queried whether the pressure would be shared between the partner Authorities. It was confirmed that this was the case.
- Clarification on the £27,000 additional rent on St John's car park. Members noted that this was referred to as 'Waitrose' car park.

In respect of all these actions, Cabinet requested that they also receive a copy of the information provided to FBWG Members.

Members also requested clarification on the £46,000 savings in terms from UK Shared Prosperity Fund within Economic Development. This was particularly pertinent given the approval of the funding for the 0.5 FTE approved as part of the Community Infrastructure Fund considered earlier at this meeting.

Vacancies and agency costs had also been discussed at the FBWG meeting earlier that day. Clarification on whether vacancies should be considered as underspends or savings was queried. Information was provided on when a vacancy would be considered an underspend and instances when it would be a saving. It was also clarified why a 'central pot' was used to hold funds when there were vacancies and that it was returned to the Service area when it was filled. It was noted that some

roles were particularly difficult to recruit to and therefore the monies might stay in the 'central pot' for long periods of time. However, once the role was recruited to the proportionate (depending on when in the financial year the role was recruited to) amount was returned to the specific service area. Concerns had been raised in respect of agency costs, and it was noted these were carefully monitored. However, it was noted that Environmental Services used agency staff regularly as there was often long-term sickness due to the physical nature of the roles within that Service area.

The Cabinet Member for Finance stated that the Quarters Three and Four reports would be presented to Council at its meeting in July 2026. The reporting schedule would be looked at closely to provide timely reporting to Members and the most up to date information as possible.

The Performance & Improvement Manager presented the Quarter Three Performance Monitoring report for Members consideration. The data had remained largely stable since the previous report at Quarter Two. A request was made that for future reports, any data that had not be received for a specific performance measured, be reported in a different way. This was to ensure that when assessing the data it showed that reporting was still taking place in this area.

**RESOLVED** that the following be noted:

- 1) The current Revenue position of £314k adverse variance;
- 2) The current Capital spending of £13.593m against a revised budget of £21.876m;
- 3) The current savings delivery is £1.457m against an annual target of £1.213m for 2025/26. This is included in the above Revenue position;
- 4) The Earmarked Reserves balances of £11.266m;
- 5) The Ward Budget allocation position to date is 22 approved allocations at £23,433.59, leaving a balance of £38,556.41 to be allocated before year end;
- 6) There is an updated procurements position, with any new items over £200,000 to be included on the forward plan;
- 7) The position on Council Tax and Business Rates be noted;
- 8) The position on benefits processing be noted;
- 9) The Q3 position on Corporate Performance Indicators be noted;
- 10) The Council's Treasury performance for Q3 of the financial year 25/26;
- 11) The position in relation to the Council's Prudential indicators;

**RECOMMENDED** that

- 12) That the Balance Sheet Monitoring Position for Q3 is noted – which is the Treasury Monitoring Report and required to be reported to Council; and
- 13) That £120k capital funding be approved for work on fixing potholes on the Aston Road roundabout and the road leading to the depot.

105/25

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

There was no Urgent Business on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 8.00 p.m.

Chairman