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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 2026

AT 6.00 P.M.

COMMITTEE ROOM 2 - PARKSIDE

MEMBERS: Councillors S. M. Evans (Chairman), C.A. Hotham (Vice-Chairman), S. J. Baxter, E. M. S. Gray, K.J. May, S. T. Nock and J. Robinson

AGENDA

- 1. To receive apologies for absence and notification of substitutes**
- 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 Electoral Matters Committee held on 11th June 2026 (Pages 5 - 10)**
- 4. Findings of the Future Local Governance in Bromsgrove Working Group & Finstall Community Governance Review Draft Recommendations (Pages 11 - 34)**

5. **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 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

16th September 2026

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

Parkside, Market Street, Bromsgrove, B61 8DA
Tel: (01527) 64252 Ext: 3072
Email: jess.bayley-hill@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

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please do not hesitate to contact the officer named above.

Notes:

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might have to move into closed session to consider exempt or
confidential information. For agenda items that are exempt, the public
are excluded.



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BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE

11TH JUNE 2026, AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE COMMITTEE - PARKSIDE

PRESENT: Councillors S. M. Evans (Chairman), C.A. Hotham (Vice-Chairman), S. J. Baxter, E. M. S. Gray, K.J. May, S. T. Nock and J. Robinson

Officers: Mrs C. Felton, Mr D. Whitney and Ms M. Bassett

1/26 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2026/27 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

As this was the first meeting of the municipal year the Electoral Services Manger asked for nominations for Chairman. Councillor S.M. Evans was proposed by Councillor K.J. May and seconded by Councillor E.M.S Gray.

There being no further nominations, it was

RESOLVED that Councillor S.M. Evans be appointed Chairman for the 2026/27 Municipal year.

2/26 **ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2026/27 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

The Chairman requested nominations for the position of Vice Chairman for the 2026/27 municipal year. Councillor C. Hotham was nominated by Councillor S.M. Evans and seconded by Councillor J. Robinson.

There being no further nominations, it was

RESOLVED that Councillor C.A. Hotham be appointed Vice Chairman of the Electoral Matters Committee for the 2025/26 Municipal year.

3/26 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES**

There were no apologies for absence.

4/26 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor S.J. Baxter declared that she was the current Vice-Chair of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

Councillor S.M. Evans declared a disclosable interest in respect of Item No. 7/26: Community Governance Review - Finstall Parish in respect of his role as County Councillor for that area.

5/26

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE HELD ON 19TH JANUARY 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th January 2026 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19th January 2026 be approved as a correct record.

6/26

ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORKING GROUP TO CONSIDER FUTURE LOCAL GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Senior Electoral Services Officer introduced the report on the establishment of a cross-party working group to consider local governance arrangements within Bromsgrove District Council.

The report had come to the Electoral Matter Committee via a resolution made at the Annual Council meeting held on 20th May 2026 in relation to future local governance arrangements within Bromsgrove District. The District Council was expected to be replaced by a new unitary authority in 2028. This meant that the current district tier of local representation and service delivery would no longer exist in its present form. It had been noted that a need to consider how local governance should operate for communities across Bromsgrove in the future had been created by this.

It had been decided that a working group be set up to look at options available by doing some preparatory work on issues that mattered to residents and stakeholders and in addition whether there was a case to progress with more formal routes such as community governance reviews (CGRs).

It was explained that the working group would undertake an engagement exercise over part of the summer and then report back to the Electoral Matters Committee with its findings.

Members were given a list of items on which the working group could include in its preparatory work. These were:

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- Agreeing and undertaking the engagement exercise, including engagement material, survey questions, maps and explanatory information
- Analysing engagement responses and wider evidence
- Reviewing existing parish, ward and community boundaries
- Identifying unparished areas and any neighbouring parish areas where boundary tidying may need to be considered
- Reviewing examples of town and parish council models, including different levels of function, service delivery and precept requirement
- Considering alternative forms of neighbourhood level governance and how these might operate in the context of Local Government Reorganisation
- Consider the broad financial and resource implications of any potential options

Members of the Committee were given an indicative timetable of the working group's business which would cumulate in its findings coming to the Electoral Matters Committee in late September 2026 and recommendations going to Council in October.

The Senior Electoral Services Officer also informed Members about the appointment of charter trustees which had been discussed at the Electoral Matters Committee meeting held in November 2025. It was explained that until formal resolutions regarding local governance were decided upon, charter trustees provided a mechanism for safeguarding civic regalia such as the Chairman's chain and other historic items.

It was noted that charter trustees were usually Councillors of the successor authority however if, as a result of a CGR a parish/town council was created, the charter trustees would be dissolved and the regalia put into the care of that council.

The Chairman then opened up the item for debate and Members asked about timetabling for a CGR and what areas a CGR would cover. It was explained that the engagement exercise would inform the necessity of a CGR and scope of any review due to be commenced. The exercise would need to make it clear that the purpose was to establish what residents would like future local governance to look like. In terms of a timetable, it was noted that CGRs were usually completed within 12 months which would mean the shadow authority would have input to any decision made.

There was a short debate on the number of returns that would come from the engagement process, and it was noted that in general they

were often very small but further noted that with sufficient promotion at least everyone involved would be given the chance to comment.

Members asked questions on the number of charter trustees and if they could be limited. It was explained that the trustees would be Councillors that would cover the unparished areas.

There was a general discussion regarding the appointment and funding of neighbourhood area committees, and it was confirmed that these would comprise a membership of unitary councillors and that the unitary authority would decide on funding for each committee.

There was more discussion on the appetite for parish councils particularly when it came to paying a precept to the parish council. It was hoped that any engagement would cover this.

The cost of the engagement was queried, and it was noted that the working group engagement would be kept within existing budgets. However, if as a result of the engagement CGRs were required, a budget would need to be assessed and assigned to the review.

After summing up, it was decided to create a cross-party working group with the first meeting of that group to be held at the close of that Committee meeting and the timetable to be based on the indicative proposed timetable. Members also decided to recommend to Council a proposal that Charter Trustees be included in any requests to be added to the Structural Changes Order.

The three recommendations within the report were proposed by Councillor J. Robinson and seconded by Councillor S.J. Baxter.

All Members were in agreement, and it was therefore:

RESOLVED that

- 1) A cross-party working group be established, comprised of the Electoral Matters Committee together with any other interested members, to undertake preparatory work in relation to future local governance arrangements within Bromsgrove District Council;
- 2) The proposed indicative timetable be approved as the basis for the working group's preparatory work; and

RECOMMENDED that

- 3) A request to Council be made to ask the relevant body for provision to be included for the appointment of Charter Trustees, to allow for the safeguarding of historic civic regalia and other historic items in the event that no parish or town council was to be in place for the Bromsgrove area on the reorganisation date.

7/26

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - FINSTALL PARISH

The Electoral Services Manager presented the report concerning the ongoing work regarding the CGR of Finstall Parish and highlighted the following:

- The consultation ran from 16th February to 17th April 2026, and all electors were sent a letter directing them to the review webpage and informing them about how they could respond.
- At the close of the consultation there had been 49 replies.
- It was noted that 80% of responders claimed to be directly affected by the proposals.
- Over two thirds of responders agreed with moving, Field View House, the area west of the railway line, out of the parish.
- A majority of respondents (60%) disagreed with the proposal of moving the unparished area east of the railway line into the Parish of Finstall. Common concerns raised regarding this were the perceived lack of benefits and the potential impact on the parish especially its increase in size.
- The second consultation was due to run from 15th June until 1st October 2026.

The Chairman then opened up the report for general discussion. Members discussed the comments provided in consultation feedback, paying close attention to remarks on the size of the Parish, that the area under review was very different to Finstall Parish and the fact that some thought they were in the Aston Fields area.

In regard to Field View House, the number of electors affected was confirmed and it was noted that it would be a small area that would move from a parished to unparished area and if electors would appreciate what this change would mean. It was questioned whether this change should be considered after the local governance engagement from the previous item had been completed.

The Chairman asked the three members of Finstall Parish Council who were in the public gallery if they wished to speak and they chose to do

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so. They noted the results of the consultation and that it seemed to point to a broad agreement to move Field View House out of the Parish but not to include the unparished area east of the railway line.

Committee members took these comments into account and again discussed the wider engagement exercise that would be soon commencing and whether this would confuse electors, especially since a major part of the consultation would involve unparished areas of Bromsgrove town.

After considering the options available, the Committee decided an alternative proposal, to defer Draft Recommendations and the second consultation on the Finstall Parish Review until after the local governance engagement exercise had been completed.

This was proposed by Councillor C.A. Hotham and seconded by Councillor S.J. Baxter.

All Members were in agreement, and it was therefore:

RESOLVED that

- 1) Draft Recommendations on the Finstall Parish Review be deferred until after the local governance engagement exercise was completed; and
- 2) The Assistant Director for Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services, following consultation with the Chairman, should make amendments to the review timetable to enable Resolution 1 above to be implemented.

8/26

TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD OF LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROPERTY SERVICES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING

There was no urgent business to consider on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 6.54 p.m.

Chairman

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Findings of the Future Local Governance in Bromsgrove Working Group & Finstall Community Governance Review Draft Recommendations

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Karen May, Leader 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 Electoral Matters Committee is asked to RESOLVE that:

- 1) The findings to date of the Local Governance Working Group, as set out in this report, be noted.**
- 2) The Electoral Matters Committee continue the preparatory work through the established working group - to develop detailed terms of reference, a proposed timetable and a full budget for a Community Governance Review for Council's consideration in due course.**
- 3) The draft recommendation for the Finstall Community Governance Review be that the area west of the railway line, as shown on the map at Appendix 1, be removed from Finstall Parish and become unparished.**
- 4) In respect of resolution 3, delegated authority be granted to the Electoral Services Manager, following consultation with the Chairman of the Electoral Matters Committee, to finalise the**

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consultation material and make any minor presentational or factual amendments required before publication.

The Electoral Matters Committee is asked to **RECOMMEND** that:

- 5) A budget, to be proposed at the Electoral Matters Committee meeting, be approved to fund specialist consultancy support and additional resources for Electoral Services to develop the detailed terms of reference, timetable and budget for the Community Governance Review. This budget should be funded from reserves and any remaining funds from member ward budgets 2026/2027.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the Annual Council meeting held on 20 May 2026, Council agreed a motion calling for a cross-party working group to undertake preparatory work in relation to future local governance arrangements within Bromsgrove District.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 11 June 2026, the Electoral Matters Committee subsequently established the Future Local Governance in Bromsgrove Working Group. The group comprised members of the Electoral Matters Committee, together with any other interested members of the Council.
- 2.3 The working group's purpose was to consider how effective local representation and neighbourhood-level governance could be maintained in Bromsgrove in the context of Local Government Reorganisation. This included considering whether there was a case for undertaking a formal Community Governance Review, as well as exploring other possible forms of local governance.
- 2.4 The working group agreed an initial scope and timetable for its work and oversaw a public engagement exercise, which ran from 1 July until 9 August 2026. The engagement sought views from residents, parish councils, community organisations and other interested parties about current local governance arrangements and the priorities that should inform any future arrangements.
- 2.5 A total of 451 responses were received. The responses demonstrated that local representation and the ability for communities to influence decisions affecting their area were important considerations. They also identified differing views about the possible creation of additional parish

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or town council arrangements, including concerns about cost, duplication and potential confusion between different levels of representation. A fuller summary of the engagement findings is provided at Appendix 2.

- 2.6 Alongside the engagement findings, the working group considered information about Community Governance Reviews, the possible role and functions of parish and town councils, the financial and practical implications of establishing new governance arrangements, and the potential treatment of assets and services. The group also considered alternative or complementary arrangements, including Neighbourhood Area Committees and the use of Special Expenses.
- 2.7 Further information about the public engagement exercise and the supporting material provided to respondents has been made available on the Council's website.
- 2.8 The timing of any Community Governance Review has been an important consideration throughout the working group's discussions. The work was initially undertaken on the basis that elections to a shadow unitary authority were expected to take place in May 2027, followed by the abolition of Bromsgrove District Council and the establishment of the new unitary authority in April 2028. This created significant practical and legal considerations about whether a review could be completed and any recommendations implemented before the transitional arrangements commenced.
- 2.9 On 7 September 2026, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced that the Local Government Reorganisation process had been paused, including in Worcestershire, while it reviewed the decisions on unitary authority structures announced in July. The duration and outcome of that review are not yet known. The working assumption is that the proposed shadow authority elections may be postponed by a year.
- 2.10 If that revised timetable is confirmed, Bromsgrove District Council may continue to operate for an additional 12 months or longer. This could provide the Council with sufficient time to establish a timetable for a Community Governance Review which would allow it to oversee the review through to its conclusion, including consultation on draft recommendations, the approval of final recommendations and, where appropriate, the making of a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order. The position remains subject to confirmation by the Government, and any timetable would therefore need to remain

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sufficiently flexible to respond to further announcements or changes to the Local Government Reorganisation programme.

Finstall Community Governance Review

- 2.11 A separate Community Governance Review relating to Finstall Parish commenced in February 2026 following a request from Finstall Parish Council. The review considered two potential boundary changes: removing the area west of the railway line from Finstall Parish and incorporating the currently unparished Rutherford Road area east of the railway line into the parish.
- 2.12 The initial consultation closed on 17 April 2026 and received 49 responses. At its meeting on 11 June 2026, the Electoral Matters Committee considered the consultation findings but deferred determining its draft recommendations while the Local Governance Working Group considered the results of the public engagement exercise and the wider future governance arrangements for Bromsgrove.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

Neighbourhood governance and the case for a Community Governance Review

- 3.1 The working group considered the potential role of Neighbourhood Area Committees within future unitary authorities. These arrangements would be expected to form part of the future neighbourhood governance landscape, although their precise structure, geographical coverage, membership, responsibilities and funding have not yet been determined.
- 3.2 Neighbourhood Area Committees would be arrangements established by the future unitary authority and could provide a mechanism for involving communities in local decision-making. They would not, however, constitute parish governance and could not create a parish or town council. The establishment or alteration of parish governance arrangements can only be considered through a Community Governance Review.
- 3.3 The working group recognised that Bromsgrove District currently contains both parished and unparished areas. Existing parish councils would continue unless changed through a separate statutory process, while residents in the unparished areas would not have the same

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additional tier of elected local representation following the replacement of the District Council.

- 3.4 The engagement findings demonstrated a significant level of concern about maintaining effective local representation following Local Government Reorganisation. Across all respondents, 90.9% considered good community representation to be extremely or very important, while 67.4% expected reorganisation to have a negative effect on local representation.
- 3.5 Responses from the unparished areas also indicated support for further consideration of neighbourhood governance:
- 54.6% favoured additional elected representatives at community or neighbourhood level
 - 44.8% considered that some decisions should be made at neighbourhood or community level
 - 40.4% favoured decision-making being shared between neighbourhood arrangements and the future unitary authority
 - 64.1% considered that new or expanded local governance arrangements should be explored.
- 3.6 The responses did not demonstrate a settled preference for one particular governance model. Neighbourhood-level arrangements, such as local committees, were selected by 43.5% of respondents in the unparished areas. A further 22.3% selected a combination of parish councils and neighbourhood arrangements, while 21.2% selected a single parish or town council covering a larger area. As respondents could select more than one option, these figures should not be treated as a direct vote between alternative models.
- 3.7 Respondents also raised practical concerns that would need to be examined through any further process. These included possible confusion about responsibilities, selected by 51.1%; additional costs to residents, selected by 49.5%; overlap between different councils or committees, selected by 37.4%; and inconsistent representation between different areas, selected by 36.3%.
- 3.8 The working group recognised that Neighbourhood Area Committees may have an important role within the future unitary authority and options to establish one of these in Bromsgrove was considered. However, given the resources required to undertake a Community Governance Review, it is not proposed that the Council progresses a separate workstream on Neighbourhood Area Committees at this stage. Developments will instead be kept under review and any relevant information taken into account as the Community Governance

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Review progresses. The engagement findings, the difference between the representation available in parished and unparished areas, and the potential additional time now available provide a sufficient basis for the Council to proceed with a Community Governance Review.

- 3.9 A Community Governance Review would allow the Council to examine all parish governance options in greater detail, including the possibility of creating a town council for the currently unparished central area of Bromsgrove. Undertaking a review would not predetermine its outcome. The final recommendations of any Community Governance Review would need to be informed by the statutory criteria, detailed consultation, community identities, proposed boundaries, financial implications and the evidence received during the earlier review stages.

Terms of Reference

- 3.10 Before a Community Governance Review can formally commence, the Council must prepare and publish terms of reference. The publication of the terms of reference marks the formal commencement of the review and begins the timetable as set out in the terms of reference.
- 3.11 Further preparatory work is therefore required before the terms of reference are presented to Council for approval. It is proposed that the Electoral Matters Committee, through the working group, continues the work to develop the scope and detailed terms of reference for the review.
- 3.12 The terms of reference will need to address:
- the geographical area or areas included within the review
 - whether the review will be limited to the currently unparished areas or include any adjoining parished areas or related boundary matters or all other parishes within the area
 - the forms of parish governance to be considered
 - the creation of a town council for all or part of the currently unparished area as a principal option to be examined
 - possible parish and town council boundaries
 - whether any proposed parish should be divided into wards and, if so, the proposed warding arrangements
 - the indicative number and distribution of councillors, or changes to these in the cases of existing parishes
 - the proposed names and styles of any new parishes or councils
 - the evidence and statutory criteria against which the options will be assessed
 - the consultation and engagement arrangements

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- the process for preparing and consulting upon draft recommendations
- the timetable for the review
- the arrangements for considering and approving the final recommendations and any resulting Reorganisation of Community Governance Order.

3.13 Identifying the creation of a town/parish council as an option within the terms of reference would not amount to a decision that one should be established. The purpose of the review would be to test that option alongside any reasonable alternatives and reach recommendations following statutory consultation and consideration of the evidence.

Review Timetable

- 3.14 Although the possible extension to the Local Government Reorganisation timetable may provide the Council with more time, the Community Governance Review will still need to be progressed within a relatively short timeframe. The terms of reference should be developed with the intention of formally commencing the review towards the end of 2026 and completing it within a 12-month period.
- 3.15 Subject to confirmation of the revised Local Government Reorganisation timetable, the review should aim to reach final recommendations and, where appropriate, enable a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order to be made by the end of 2027. This would provide the best opportunity for Bromsgrove District Council to oversee the process through to completion before any future transitional period to a unitary council begins.
- 3.16 The timetable will need to allow sufficient time for evidence gathering, consultation on the initial options, preparation and publication of draft recommendations, further consultation, consideration of representations, approval of final recommendations and preparation of any resulting Order. It will also need to remain flexible enough to respond to further Government announcements about Local Government Reorganisation.
- 3.17 A detailed budget will need to be developed alongside the terms of reference before the Community Governance Review formally commences. This will need to provide separately for the cost of conducting the review and, conditionally, the potential cost of establishing a new council.

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- 3.18 At this stage, the Electoral Matters Committee is not being asked to approve the detailed terms of reference, formally commence the Community Governance Review or determine its outcome. The Committee is being asked to endorse the working group's conclusion that a review should be undertaken and agree that preparatory work should continue to develop the terms of reference, timetable and associated budget requirements.
- 3.19 Subject to the Committee's consideration, a further report will be presented to Council in October 2026. That report will update Council on the of the working group's findings. It will also seek Council's approval for an allocation from reserves to provide the specialist or additional officer capacity required to prepare the detailed terms of reference and full budget for the review.

Finstall Community Governance Review

- 3.20 The initial consultation showed support for removing the area west of the railway line from Finstall Parish, with 68% of respondents agreeing with the proposed change. By comparison, 60% disagreed with incorporating the currently unparished Rutherford Road area into the parish. Comments about the latter proposal included concerns about community identity, the benefits of joining the parish and the additional parish precept.
- 3.21 The Local Governance Working Group has now completed its initial consideration of future local governance arrangements. It is therefore appropriate for the Electoral Matters Committee to determine draft recommendations for the Finstall review and proceed to the next consultation stage.
- 3.22 Having regard to the initial consultation responses and the matters considered by the working group, it is proposed that the draft recommendation should be to remove the area west of the railway line from Finstall Parish, in Appendix 1 and make no change to the parish boundary in respect of the Rutherford Road area.
- 3.23 This remains a draft recommendation and will be subject to further consultation. The Electoral Matters Committee will consider the responses to that consultation before determining its final recommendations.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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- 4.1 There is currently no specific budget available for preparing or undertaking a Community Governance Review. Additional capacity by the Council will be required to begin developing the detailed terms of reference, timetable, consultation approach and full budget for the review.
- 4.2 Electoral Services will have significant competing demands arising from the delivery of scheduled elections. It is therefore considered unlikely that the preparatory work for the Community Governance Review can be completed entirely within the existing capacity of the team without affecting other statutory work.
- 4.3 Officers are exploring the appointment of a specialist Community Governance Review consultant to assist with the initial preparatory work, including the development of the terms of reference. Indicative costs are currently being sought and, where available, a further update will be provided at the Electoral Matters Committee meeting.
- 4.4 If suitable consultancy support cannot be secured, additional funding would instead be required to backfill capacity within the Electoral Services team. This would release an appropriate officer to undertake the preparatory work while ensuring that the Council retains sufficient capacity to deliver its statutory electoral responsibilities.
- 4.5 Subject to the Electoral Matters Committee's consideration of this report, the report to Council in October 2026 will seek approval for an initial allocation to fund specialist consultancy support and the backfilling of Electoral Services capacity. This initial allocation would allow work on the detailed terms of reference and the financial and operational requirements of the review to begin.
- 4.6 The amount and proposed funding source for this initial allocation have not yet been determined. Any funding request presented to Council will identify whether the cost is one-off, the budget from which it is proposed to be met, and the resulting financial consequences. This will include any reduction in funding available for other Council priorities or activities, so that members can make an informed decision about the allocation.
- 4.7 The initial allocation would not represent approval of the full budget for conducting the Community Governance Review. A further detailed budget proposal would be developed alongside the terms of reference and presented to Council at a later date, for approval before the review formally commences.

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- 4.8 The full Community Governance Review budget will need to take account of:
- project staffing and any continuing need for additional capacity or backfilling
 - specialist Community Governance Review consultancy support
 - consultation design, printing, delivery, postage and publicity
 - accessible consultation materials and targeted engagement
 - data analysis, electorate forecasting, mapping and GIS work
 - legal, electoral, financial and communications support
 - preparation and publication of reports, recommendations and any resulting Reorganisation of Community Governance Order
 - external legal or specialist advice arising from Local Government Reorganisation (if required)
 - an appropriate contingency for changes to the options, consultation requirements or timetable.
- 4.9 Separate financial provision will also need to be considered for the potential establishment of a new town council and any other additional parishes. These costs would arise only if the Community Governance Review ultimately recommended the creation of a council(s) and a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order was made.
- 4.10 Potential establishment costs could include specialist implementation support, the appointment of an interim clerk, recruitment and initial staffing, governance and financial systems, accommodation and IT, the first election, councillor induction, civic arrangements, and work associated with any transfer of assets, services, contracts or liabilities.
- 4.11 It is anticipated that the further report containing the proposed terms of reference will therefore need to set out two separate provisions:
- the full budget required to conduct and complete the Community Governance Review
 - conditional provision for the potential establishment of a new town council and any additional parishes.
- 4.12 The amount required for each provision will be developed as the scope of the review and the potential implementation requirements are refined. Any provision for establishing a town council would remain conditional and would only be used if that outcome were subsequently approved through the Community Governance Review process.

Fininstall Community Governance Review

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- 4.13 There will be further costs associated with consultation on the draft recommendation. These are expected to be met from within existing Electoral Services budgets.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Community Governance Reviews are undertaken under Part 4, Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The Council must also have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
- 5.2 The recommendations contained in this report would not formally commence a Community Governance Review. The review would commence when the Council publishes its terms of reference. The preparatory work proposed, including appointing a consultant or providing additional officer capacity, developing the terms of reference and preparing a detailed budget, can therefore take place before the statutory review begins.
- 5.3 The review will formally begin when the Council publishes its terms of reference. The Council will then be required to complete the review in accordance with the timetable set out in those terms of reference. That timetable should provide for the publication of the Council's final recommendations within 12 months of the date on which the review begins.
- 5.4 Once the terms of reference have been published and the review has formally commenced, the Council will be under a statutory duty to undertake and conclude the review. The legislation does not provide a general mechanism for the Council simply to pause or abandon a review once it has begun. It is therefore important that the scope, timetable, resources and decision-making arrangements are sufficiently developed before the terms of reference are published.
- 5.5 The Council may modify the terms of reference during the review, but any modifications must also be published. Any changes would need to be compatible with the statutory requirements and consultation duties. Substantial changes may also require further consultation to ensure that the process remains fair and that interested parties have a meaningful opportunity to respond.

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- 5.6 Once commenced, the Council must complete the review. However, it may conclude that no changes should be made if this is supported by the consultation responses and other evidence.
- 5.7 The Council must consult local electors and other interested parties, take account of the representations received and have regard to the statutory criteria. Any final recommendations must reflect community identities and interests and provide effective and convenient community governance.
- 5.8 Where the final recommendations involve changes to parish governance, these would ordinarily be implemented through a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order. The Order may address matters including boundaries, warding, councillor numbers, electoral arrangements, the first election, the first anticipated precept and transitional arrangements.
- 5.9 Any proposed timetable will intend to enable Bromsgrove District Council to complete the review and make any resulting Order before a future Local Government Reorganisation transitional period begins. Further legal advice may be required if the reorganisation timetable or responsibilities of the existing and successor authorities change.

Finstall Community Governance Review

- 5.10 The Finstall Community Governance Review has already commenced and therefore must be completed. As the decision on the draft recommendations was deferred in June 2026, the published timetable will need to be revised and any modification published.
- 5.11 The Council must consult on the draft recommendation and consider the representations received before determining and publishing its final recommendation. The outcome of the Finstall review cannot be predetermined by the draft recommendation agreed at this meeting.

6. OTHER – IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 The proposal to undertake a Community Governance Review is directly linked to Local Government Reorganisation and the need to consider how local representation can be maintained within a future unitary authority.

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- 6.2 The pause to the reorganisation timetable may provide Bromsgrove District Council with sufficient time to undertake and complete the review, and make any resulting Reorganisation of Community Governance Order, before a future transitional period begins. However, the revised timetable has not yet been confirmed.
- 6.3 The review timetable will therefore need to remain flexible and take account of further Government announcements. If transitional arrangements begin before the review or its implementation is complete, further legal advice may be required about the responsibilities of Bromsgrove District Council, any shadow authority and the successor unitary authority.
- 6.4 Any Community Governance Review will also need to take account of emerging proposals for Neighbourhood Area Committees or other neighbourhood governance arrangements within the future unitary authority. A town council and a Neighbourhood Area Committee would have different roles and could operate alongside one another.

Relevant Council Priority

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

Climate Change Implications

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

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.7 There are no direct equalities and diversity implications arising from this report. Any future Community Governance Review will need to provide residents and interested parties with a fair and accessible opportunity to participate.
- 6.8 The equalities implications of the proposed terms of reference, consultation arrangements and any final recommendations will be considered as the review develops. An Equality Impact Assessment will be prepared where appropriate.

Community Impact Implications

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- 6.9 There are no specific implications for community safety, health and wellbeing.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The principal risks are that the Local Government Reorganisation timetable changes, insufficient capacity or funding is available to complete the review, or the process is perceived to have predetermined the creation of a town council.
- 7.2 These risks will be managed by completing detailed preparatory work before the review formally commences, securing appropriate specialist or additional officer capacity, maintaining a flexible timetable and ensuring that consultation considers reasonable governance options without predetermining the outcome.
- 7.3 There is also a risk that existing parish councils may wish to review their current arrangements. It is considered good practice for a principal council to review community governance arrangements by conducting a review every 10-15 years and Bromsgrove has not conducted a widescale review in the past 15 years.
- 7.4 This risk could be managed by extending the terms of reference to include the whole of Bromsgrove district, giving parishes the opportunity to review their existing arrangements. This will be considered further as work progresses on the Community Governance Review.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Map indicating proposed new boundary of Finstall Parish

Appendix 2 - Overview of responses to Local Governance Engagement Exercise

Background Papers

Local Governance Review Consultation Exercise documentation on the Council's website - [Future Local Governance in Bromsgrove webpage](#)

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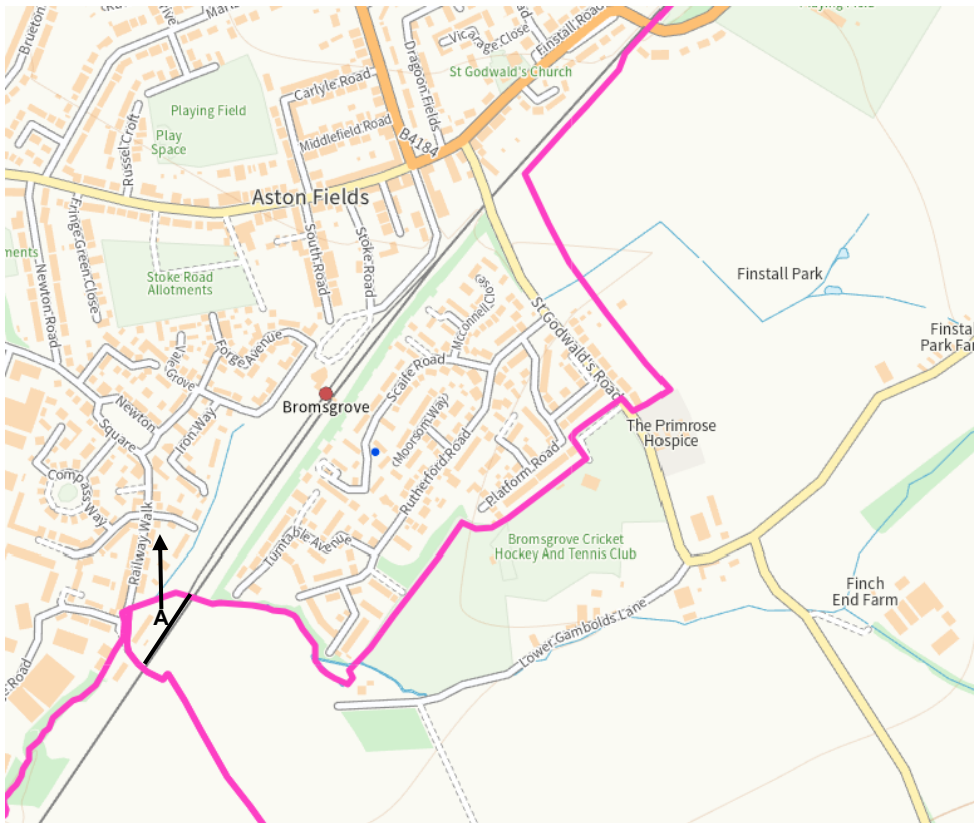
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9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Karen May, Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling	
Assistant Director	Claire Felton, Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services	14/09/26
Financial Services	James Walton, Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer	
Legal Services	Nicola Cummings, Principal Solicitor - Governance	14/09/26

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Appendix 1: Map indicating proposed new boundary of Finstall Parish



Pink line is the current Finstall Parish Boundary.

Area A is the area west of the railway line. It is proposed that this area is removed from the Parish.

Black line is the proposed new Finstall Parish Boundary considered in the review.

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Future Local Governance Engagement Exercise

Overview of responses and points for consideration

The survey contained three question routes: questions for respondents in parished areas, questions for respondents in non-parished areas, and questions asked of all respondents. Results from these routes are therefore considered separately.

Percentages are based on the number answering each question, not the full number who took part in the exercise.

Measure	Recorded result	Comment
Overall participation	445 survey records; 439 answered Question 1	Response totals vary by question because of routing and skipped questions.
Respondent type	424 respondents identified as residents (96.6%)	Respondents could select more than one category. Twenty identified as parish councillors and seven as district councillors.
Location	156 selected Bromsgrove Centre; 21 selected unparished Rubery; 268 selected a named parish	The geographical spread was uneven. The largest parish response groups were Wythall (47), Catshill and North Marlbrook (33), Alvechurch (30), Hagley (29) and Stoke (27).

Responses from non-parished areas

Questions 3 to 11 explored views in the non-parished areas. Depending on the question, between 179 and 184 people responded. The results indicate interest in retaining or strengthening local influence following reorganisation, but do not point to one settled governance model.

When asked which local area they felt most connected to, respondents used a mixture of town-wide, neighbourhood and estate-level descriptions. Of 180 responses, 75 (41.7%) were coded as Bromsgrove town centre and central areas. Other recurring identities included Aston Fields (17), Rubery (19), Sidemoor (11), Charford (9), Sanders Park (6) and Oakalls/Parklands (5), with a further 29 spread across other Bromsgrove neighbourhoods.

This suggests that local identity is not expressed at one consistent geographical scale. A larger Bromsgrove identity appears important to many respondents, while a substantial number identify more closely with distinct neighbourhoods. If a review is commenced, this would support testing boundaries and governance options rather

than assuming at the outset that either one town-wide body or several smaller bodies would best reflect community identity.

Question	Key result	Outcome
Local elected representation	• 54.6% favoured additional elected representatives at community or neighbourhood level. • 13.7% favoured local representation without necessarily electing new representatives. • 20.2% considered unitary representation sufficient.	There was a clear preference among respondents for some form of local representation, but not complete agreement that this must involve an additional elected tier.
Where decisions should be made	• 44.8% favoured some decisions at neighbourhood/community level. • 40.4% favoured shared decision-making. • 7.1% favoured decisions being made by the unitary authority.	Most respondents wanted a local role in at least some decisions. The question did not define which powers or services should sit at each level.
Whether governance should be considered	64.1% said yes, 14.1% no and 21.7% were unsure.	This supports further consideration of options, but is not in itself a preference for a particular structure or evidence of support for its detailed costs and function

Preferred approaches

Question 7 allowed more than one answer. Neighbourhood-level arrangements such as local committees received the most selections (43.5%). A mix of parish councils and neighbourhood arrangements was selected by 22.3%, a single parish or town council covering a larger area by 21.2%, smaller parish councils by 8.2%, and no new structure by 14.1%; 11.4% were unsure.

This suggests that neighbourhood committees had the broadest initial appeal, while there was also interest in parish or town council arrangements.

Costs, funding and practical concerns

The main concerns were confusion about responsibilities (51.1%), additional cost to residents (49.5%), insufficient local interest or participation (40.1%), overlap between councils or committees (37.4%), inconsistent representation between areas (36.3%) and complexity (31.3%). Only 12.1% selected that they had no concerns.

Funding responses were mixed. General funding from the future unitary authority was the most selected option (38.5%), followed by a combination of unitary and locally raised funding (27.9%). Locally raised funding alone and no additional funding each received 12.8%. On a parish or town council precept, 27.2% said they would support one and 41.7% said they might support one depending on cost and benefits. A further 21.7% would not support an additional precept and 9.4% were unsure.

These responses indicate that cost and clarity would be central to any later consultation. The combined 68.9% who were supportive or potentially supportive of a precept should not be described as unconditional support: the larger group made its view expressly dependent on the level of cost and the benefits provided.

Current visibility and understanding of parish councils

The parish-route questions provide a useful indication of how visible existing parish councils are to respondents and how far people understand or know how to access them. The results show a difference between recognising that a parish council exists and understanding its work or knowing how to engage with it.

Measure	Result	What it may indicate
Awareness that the area has a parish council	67.8% aware 10.9% unsure 21.3% not aware (395 responses)	Existence was known to around two-thirds, but nearly one-third were unsure or unaware.
Awareness of responsibilities and activities	25.4% very aware 31.0% fairly aware 18.8% slightly aware 24.9% not aware (394 responses)	56.3% reported being very or fairly aware, while 43.7% had only slight or no awareness.
Knowing how to contact or get involved	44.6% knew how 13.3% had heard of ways but were unsure 36.7% did not know 5.4% unsure (392 responses)	Practical accessibility appears weaker than general recognition: 55.4% did not give an unqualified yes.

Some respondents described parish councils as accessible, responsive and important to village identity. Others reported limited visibility, poor communication, difficulty influencing decisions, concerns about accountability, or uncertainty about the value received for the precept. These are differing experiences rather than findings that apply equally to every parish.

For the Working Group, this suggests that the presence of a parish council does not automatically mean that residents understand its role or feel able to engage with it. If a new parish or town council were considered, visibility, communication, transparency, accessibility and arrangements for ongoing public participation would be important design and implementation issues, alongside its legal structure and budget.

Views asked of all respondents

Awareness of reorganisation and governance arrangements

Statement tested	Very/fairly aware	Slightly/not aware
District councils are expected to be replaced by larger unitary authorities	61.2%	38.8%
Bromsgrove District Council is expected to cease as a district council from 2028	53.9%	46.1%
Existing parish councils continue unless changed through a separate legal process	33.4%	66.6%
Future unitary authorities should establish neighbourhood governance arrangements such as neighbourhood area committees	26.9%	73.1%

Awareness was therefore strongest for the broad move to unitary local government and lower for the consequences for parish councils and neighbourhood governance. This limits how far preferences about unfamiliar structures can be treated as settled views. Several comments also said that respondents needed clearer explanations of the options, powers, responsibilities and costs before they could give an informed view.

Importance and expected impact of representation

Of the 441 respondents, 90.9% considered good community representation extremely or very important. At the same time, 67.3% expected reorganisation to have a negative impact on local representation, compared with 10.2% expecting a positive impact, 6.1% no impact and 16.3% who did not know. This shows concern about local voice but not support for any particular solution.

Themes from written comments

The comments included views both for and against additional local structures. Recurring themes included:

- Concern that a larger authority could feel remote, with local knowledge, identity and smaller communities receiving less attention.
- A desire for visible and accessible local representation, with clear powers and influence.
- Concern about cost, duplication, bureaucracy and whether a precept would provide proportionate benefits.
- Mixed experiences of existing parish councils. Positive comments referred to responsiveness, village identity and support for local facilities; critical comments referred to limited communication, insularity, accountability, effectiveness and value for money.
- Interest in practical local issues and distinct place identities, together with requests for clearer information and evidence that consultation will influence decisions.

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