



# Overview and Scrutiny **Annual Report**

**2021-2022**



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council

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## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022**

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## **FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

Welcome to Bromsgrove District Councils Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2021/22.

The Board's role is to act as a critical friend to the council, providing check and balance to the decision making process with a view of maximising service provision to residents.

The Board is cross party and functions in an impartial, independent and non-political manner.

Since the easing of Covid restrictions in May 2021 the Board has met in person which has been a welcome return to normality.

It has been a busy year for the Board and many areas of the Council's work have been scrutinised, the details of which are included in the bulk of this report.

A particular concern of the Board has been the financial position the Council finds itself in. The continued use of reserves to prop up the day to day running of the Council is not sustainable. A longer term funding solution must be found if the Council is to continue in its present form.

Three task have had their recommendations considered by Cabinet and Council with varying degrees of success in influencing policy change:

- Equalities task group
- Flooding task group
- Libraries task group

A new task group has recently been formed focussing on fuel poverty.

The Finance and Budget working group continues to meet regularly. However, the Corporate Performance task group has ceased, and its role is now within the remit of the main board.

I would like to thank all those members who Chaired and contributed to these task and working groups over the last year. I would also like to thank all Board members for their hard work throughout the year and our Vice Chairman, Councillor Jo Till. My appreciation also goes to the members of the Council and Cabinet for their regular attendance.

The Board couldn't function without the many reports and presentations provided by Officers of the Council and I would like to express my gratitude to all of them and in particular Jo Gresham the Boards excellent Democratic Services Officer.

**Councillor Charles Hotham**  
**Chairman**

## **INTRODUCTION**

We are pleased to present the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report which outlines our work during 2021-2022 (this covers the municipal year from May 2021 to April 2022) and provides general information on the overview and scrutiny processes at Bromsgrove District Council.

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

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

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

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

**MEMBERSHIP** (The Board is made up of 11 Members)



**Councillor Charles Hotham**  
**Chairman**



**Councillor Jo-Anne Till**  
**Vice-Chairman**



Councillor Sue Baxter



Councillor Andrew  
Beaumont



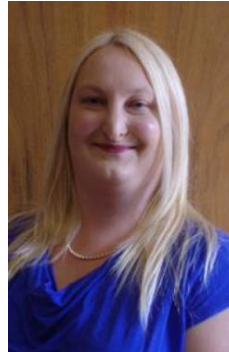
Councillor Steve  
Colella



Councillor Richard  
Deeming



Councillor Rob Hunter



Councillor Helen Jones  
from November 2021



Councillor Adrian Kriss



Councillor Peter McDonald



Councillor Caroline Spencer



Councillor Michael Thompson  
until July 2021

## **THE ROLE OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Covid-19**

The Covid-19 pandemic continued to have a significant impact on Council operations. In May 2021 the Government removed the temporary legislation that allowed local authorities to hold public meetings virtually. This meant that Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings were once again held in person after May 7th, 2021. Meetings are live streamed if there is significant local interest in the items being considered at Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings. Meetings of scrutiny Task Groups and Working Groups continue to be held remotely, since these meetings are private and are not live streamed.



## **REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE BOARD**

The Board continues to receive updates in order to monitor the progress of recommendations it has made, through the Recommendation Tracker. This contains both recommendations put forward by Task Groups and accepted by the Cabinet, together with recommendations put forward by the Board itself. In respect of Task Groups, the Board does, where necessary, receive an update report 12 months following acceptance of its recommendations.

During the course of the year the Board received a number of reports and made a number of recommendations. There has been continued support from the relevant Portfolio Holders this year, with regular attendance from a number of them when a report which relates to their portfolio has been presented to the Board. This has given them an opportunity to hear first-hand the debate and ideas that the Board has put forward. On a number of occasions, whilst the Board has not made any recommendations in respect of an item, it has endorsed and supported recommendations which would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting.

### **6th July 2021**

#### **Air Quality Report – Worcestershire Regulatory Services**

Members of the Board requested an update of Air Quality in the District for their meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2022. During this update Members were informed that there were currently three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) identified within Bromsgrove District, however it was confirmed that during monitoring over the last municipal year no exceedances of the national average of elevated levels of nitrogen dioxide was identified in any of these AQMAs.

During a detailed presentation Members were informed that the responsibility of active travel plans lay with Worcestershire County Council (WCC). In addition to this it was confirmed that currently there was an improving picture emerging in respect of air-quality across the District.

At this meeting the Board agreed that an item in respect of Air Quality would be added to the Board's work programme for consideration on an annual basis.

#### **Staff Mileage**

This update in respect of Staff Mileage had been requested by the Board in order to provide clarification on the amount of staff mileage claimed over the previous municipal year. It was confirmed that there had been a decrease in the amount of mileage claimed during the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown and that this had continued a trend which had been seen over the previous municipal years.

Members were keen to further understand whether the data had been bench-marked against other similar sized Councils within Worcestershire. It was confirmed that a bench-marking exercise would be undertaken, and the results reported back to Members later in the municipal year (see 15<sup>th</sup> February 2022).

### Waseley Hill – Notice of Motion

Councillor P. McDonald submitted a Motion regarding Waseley Hills Car Parking to full Council at the meeting held on 21st April 2021.

After a detailed discussion regarding concerns in car parking charges at Waseley Hills Country Park and the potential of schemes being implemented it was agreed that it seemed more equitable if all visitors, no matter where they had travelled from, were permitted to use the car parking for free.

As the charges for car parking at Waseley Hills Country Park were administered by Worcestershire County Council (WCC) it was agreed by the Board that a letter be written on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Board to the relevant Portfolio Holder at WCC expressing the Board's concerns. At the time of writing this report no response had been received from WCC however the Board will look to include a discussion on this as part of their Work Programme in the new municipal year.

## **13<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

### Adoption of land by Bromsgrove District Council and the management of Commuted Sums for off-site provision

It was requested that this report be pre-scrutinised by the Board prior to its consideration at Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2022. The Head of Planning, Regeneration and Leisure Services presented the report and Members were informed that when a new development was planned which included open space provision, that open space would need to be managed appropriately by a developer or other management bodies in perpetuity.

There was a detailed discussion by Members on complex issues that could potentially impact residents across the District.

### Bromsgrove Town Centre Management Strategy - 2021 Action Plan

During consideration of this report Councillor K. May, who was present in her role as Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, the Town Centre and Strategic Partnerships explained, that an events management company had been engaged to provide a full events programme in the District over the forthcoming months. It was also reported that the recruitment of a Business Support Advisor was currently underway in order to help businesses reopen after the Covid-19 pandemic in a safe and resilient way.

Some Members queried the consultation that had taken place outside of the main town centre and it was felt that going back out to local centres was an important part of the Action Plan and needed to be carried out as soon as possible. As a result of this the following recommendation was agreed by the Board:

*‘that the Cabinet resolves to adopt the Bromsgrove Town Management Strategy – 2021 Action Plan and at the earliest opportunity that the relevant officers revisit the Town Centres to update the plan and offer support’.*

This recommendation was agreed as presented at the Cabinet meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

#### Equalities Task Group - Cabinet Response

The Cabinet response in respect of the Equalities Task Group was discussed at Cabinet and Council meetings held in July 2021. Consideration of the Cabinet response by the Board is mainly procedural and for completeness.

The Board were informed that Cabinet had made some amendments to the recommendations during consideration at their meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021. These were as follows:

#### **Amendment to Recommendation 1**

*That an annual Equalities Report be prepared for 2021 and annually thereafter.*

#### **Amendment to Recommendation 2**

*The Contractors’ Questionnaire should be updated to be as robust as possible in respect of equalities issues.*

#### **Amendment to Recommendation 4**

- a) Clear guidelines are put in place in respect of the secondment process and made available to all staff; and*
- b) Guidance on the benefits of staff development and progression be put in place and accessible to all staff.*

These recommendations would be tracked and updated as part of the Recommendation Tracker item that was due to be considered at the end of the municipal year.

#### Flooding Task Group - Cabinet Response

The Cabinet response in respect of the Flooding Task Group was also discussed at this meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and it was confirmed that this report had been discussed at both Cabinet and Council meetings held in July 2021.

At the Cabinet meeting it was clarified that a maintenance plan was currently being undertaken by North Worcestershire Water Management (NWWM) regarding Council owned assets and partners' assets. This report was due to be considered by Cabinet later in the municipal year.

As this report would be of particular interest to the Flooding Task Group there was the potential for the task group to reconvene and scrutinise the plan prior to its consideration at Cabinet.

This final report was pre-scrutinised at the main Board meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022 (see details below).

Councillor R. Hunter, as Chairman of the task group expressed his disappointment that none of the recommendations made as part of this investigation were agreed by the Cabinet and he hoped that the NWWM report would be helpful in mitigating future flood events in the District.

## **18<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

### Staff Survey

The Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy and the Human Resources & Development Manager provided information to the Board in respect of the Staff Survey during the Covid-19 pandemic. During the update there was detailed discussion regarding the following:

- Some delays had been experienced for the full Staff Survey however a number of smaller surveys had been carried out over the course of 2021.
- The Staff Survey would be administered and analysed by an external provider through the Local Government Association (LGA).

During the consideration of this item Members were interested in the cost of the Staff Survey. As a result of this the following recommendation was made to the Cabinet by the Board

*'the Cabinet are fully informed of the higher and lower cost of the Staff Survey.'*

On being put to the vote the recommendation was agreed.

This recommendation was resolved by the Cabinet at their meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

### Budget Framework

As part of the update in respect of the Budget Framework it was noted that the Budget for 2022 was complex. In order to mitigate any issues workshops would be offered to all Members in order to help them further understand Local Government finance and

any potential changes to funding in the future. These workshops took place online on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021 with all Members invited to attend.

### Libraires Task Group - Cabinet Response

Councillor S. Colella presented this report and expressed that he and other task group members were disappointed with the response from the Cabinet in respect of the findings and recommendations of the task group. It was with this in mind that the task group was reconvened, and the relevant Portfolio Holders invited to attend the meeting in order to discuss the Cabinet response in more detail.

## **22<sup>nd</sup> November 2021**

### CCTV Update – Environmental Services

Members were keen to be provided with an update in respect of the use of CCTV. At this meeting the Head of Environmental Services and the Environmental Services Manager presented the CCTV Update.

During a detailed presentation, a number of areas were discussed including incidents of fly-tipping and deterrents utilised including Regulatory Investigation Powers Act (RIPA) powers. It was clear from the report that the number of incidences of fly-tipping were significantly down compared to previous years which Members felt was a positive outcome for the residents of Bromsgrove.

### Financial Update Regarding Leisure Services

During the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns Leisure Services nationally had been dramatically affected. As part of this item Members were updated on the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's contracted leisure service and the steps taken to mitigate the financial risks presented by Covid-19 in 2020/21 and 2021/22. In addition to this, the options available to the Council moving forward were also discussed.

## **17<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

### Bromsgrove District Council Car Parks - Adoption of Cashless Payments and Operational Procedures for Recreation Road South Car Park and Churchfields Multi-Storey Car Park - Pre-Scrutiny

This report was presented to Cabinet at their meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and the Board were keen to pre-scrutinise prior to its consideration at that meeting. The report recommended that all Pay and Display car parks within the Town Centre should adopt a cashless payment system. Members were informed that although cashless machines would be adopted, all car parks, with the exception of Churchfields Multi-storey Car Park would still retain one cash payment machine.

During consideration of the report a numbers of areas were highlighted by officers including the introduction of the Mi Permit app within the Town's car parks in 2021, the

Equality Impact Assessment that had been undertaken by the Council and the benefit of the introduction of cashless payments for Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) within the District to undertake more of their normal enforcement duties.

Some concerns were expressed by the Board regarding the Churchfields Multi-Storey Car Park and the potential of keeping a cash payment option at this site. However, Officers confirmed that this proposal would increase costs at the Churchfields site. In addition to this, any resulting costs of the installation of two machines would be higher due to the ongoing maintenance or if one or both machines were subject to vandalism.

During the debate heritage street lighting within the Town Centre was discussed and it was decided that this subject would be discussed at a Finance and Budget Scrutiny Working Group meeting later in the municipal year.

#### Levelling Up Fund - former Market Hall and Windsor St sites - pre-scrutiny

In December 2021 it was announced that £14.5m had been awarded from the Government's Levelling Up fund. At this meeting of the Board Members were informed that some of the funding was to be utilised to develop a cultural and creative hub in Bromsgrove town centre on the Market Hall site. In respect of the Windsor Street site, it was proposed that the project at this site would be pre-development i.e., preparing the site in readiness for development and that a feasibility study was currently underway regarding the clearance of the Windsor Street site.

The delivery timescales of the projects were reported as March 2025 and a detailed risk register was in place to ensure that the projects were monitored closely.

It was widely acknowledged that this was an exciting great opportunity for the District and might help to alleviate revenue pressures on the Council.

At this meeting the Board agreed that an item in respect of the Levelling Up Funding be added to the Board's work programme for consideration every six months.

## **15th February 2022**

### Mileage Benchmarking Update

This item was provided as a follow up as requested by the Board at their meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2021. Once again, the Head of Business Transformation, Organisational Development and Digital Strategy and the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager attended the meeting and the report provided data for similar local authorities to Bromsgrove District Council, primarily Malvern Hills District Council and Wychavon District Council.

The data appeared to show a continuing trend in terms of mileage claims falling for Council staff and this reflected the flexibility of the different ways of working that had emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in respect of the use of different types of technology and of officers working remotely.

### Sustainable Warmth Funding - Pre-Scrutiny

The Head of Community and Housing Services presented a report on the subject of the Council's receipt of a £429,000 Sustainable Warmth Funding grant. The grant is designed to help fund actions that could be taken to improve the energy efficiency of properties in the District with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating D – G.

This was a detailed report that outlined the components to the funding of up to £25,000 in Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) grants for eligible households and the average Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Phase 3 grants of £10,000.

It was explained that the deadlines for expenditure of the grant funding was 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023, and that the Council was aiming to target low-income households as funding recipients.

### The Council's 2022/23 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25 Draft - Pre-scrutiny

At this meeting the Executive Director of Resources presented the Draft 2022/23 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25 for the Board's consideration. This report had also been pre-scrutinised at a meeting of the Finance and Budget Working Group. The budget and Medium Term Financial Plan had been developed in challenging financial circumstances for local government. It was reported that savings and income opportunities had been identified in some areas and these had been incorporated into the budget.

As part of consideration of this report Members were advised that there were actions that could be taken, including making efficiency savings and introducing additional income to help alleviate budget pressures. However, it was clear that some difficult decisions might also need to be made by Members.

The format of the report, which was different to the style that had been adopted in previous years, saw Members commenting that the content was clearer than it had been in previous years and Members thanked officers for making these changes.

## **28<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

### Land Drainage Watercourse Maintenance Operations - Pre-Scrutiny

The Board were keen to pre-scrutinise this report as it was hoped that it would provide some clarification on discussions that had taken place as a result of the Impact of Flooding in the District Task Group earlier on in the municipal year. During consideration of this item a detailed presentation was delivered to Members. This provided information on what measures were to be taken in order to mitigate future flooding events in the district.

It was hoped that the schedule of maintenance works, which, it was proposed, would be carried out by an external contractor, would ensure that works were carried out on a more regular basis.

The first year of the contract was to be considered as a pilot scheme and could be reviewed after the first year had been completed. An update on the scheme was added to the Board's work programme for consideration after the first year of works had been carried out.

### Equality Annual Report 2021-2022

The Head of Transformation & Organisational Development presented the Equality Annual Report 2021-2022 and highlighted that it was the first report of its kind and was as a result of a recommendation made by the Equalities Task Group investigation.

This report was very well received by Members who were pleased to see the large amount of work undertaken by officers in this area.

### Planning Determination Timescales - Verbal Update

During this verbal update Members were informed that there were no particular concerns in respect of planning application determination timelines and that 100% of the applications received within the last quarter had been considered within the agreed timeframe which was set by central government or in certain instances in agreement with the applicant.

Planning Officers worked proactively with developers and if necessary, an extension of time agreement was put in place.

There were discussions at this meeting regarding the data that was presented to the Board and how timescales were measured.

### Task Group Updates

At this meeting Councillor S. Colella presented an update on the Impact of the Review of Library Services Task Group. Members were informed that the task group was reconvened late in 2021 and that Councillors K. May and P. Thomas had been invited to discuss potential amendments. Although no amendments to the recommendations were made it was noted that the investigation had been worthwhile and had resulted in a good report that confirmed that libraries would continue to receive the funding they deserved.

### Topic Proposal - Fuel Poverty

Councillor R. Hunter presented the Topic Proposal form to establish a Fuel Poverty Task Group. As residents were facing an unprecedented rising level in the cost of living, he explained that it was important that the Council provided as much support as possible to those residents identified as in need.



During a very detailed and robust debate some Members discussed the potential of inviting an officer to present further detailed information on what services were available to residents. This approach, it was felt, would mean that residents would be quickly signposted to any initiatives or grants available to them. However, on being put to the vote it was agreed to establish a Fuel Poverty Task Group and Councillor R. Hunter be appointed as Chairman of the task group.

## **25<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

### Scrutiny of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership

The Overview and Scrutiny Board has a statutory duty to scrutinise the work of the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP) on an annual basis.

Included in the report and presentation was detailed information on the following:

- The background to the NWCSP, the Partnership Plan and the annual strategic assessment which picked up key crime and community safety priorities
- The allocation of funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Capital Fund for CCTV and fly-tipping.
- The work of the Bromsgrove Community Safety Project Officers on behalf of the Council and the CSP.
- The use of communications and social media campaigns to promote key safety messages and the work of the NWCSP including the Nominated Neighbour Scheme, the Respect Programme and Hate Crime Awareness Week.
- The Key Priorities agreed by partners for 2021-22:
  - Violence and Abuse
  - Theft and Acquisitive Crime
  - ASB, Damage and Nuisance
  - Protecting Vulnerable Communities
- Community Safety Project Updates for 2021-22 including information on the Respect Programme, the Empowering Young People Programme, the Youth Hub, the Asda Car Park Project, the Friday Night Diversionary Sessions, Bromsgrove Listening Service, Young Citizen's Challenge and the Virtual Decisions Knife Crime Project.

This was a very detailed update from the Community Safety Manager and Members expressed their thanks and appreciation to the team and stated it was humbling to see all of the work that had taken place in this area.

## CCTV Update

This was the second CCTV update that Members considered during this municipal year; the first being the CCTV update from an Environmental Services perspective. The Head of Community and Housing Services presented the update to Members and explained that the CCTV Monitoring Centre had dual roles of monitoring Lifeline and CCTV and covered North Worcestershire which included Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest.

It was highlighted that CCTV cameras were a tool to reduce the fear of crime, as well as detect crime. The impact of this had been particularly seen in the decrease of incidents at Sanders Park since the installation of a camera. Redeployable cameras had been implemented in hotspot areas throughout the District.

It was queried whether all of the recommendations from the CCTV Task group investigation had been implemented. Officers explained that the majority of the recommendations had been undertaken however delays had been experienced due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, some of the cameras remained as analogue rather than being upgraded to the higher definition cameras. The Head of Community and Housing Services stated that plans were underway to make the change from analogue to digital cameras in all areas of the District however there was a cost to making these changes. Officers undertook to look at the cost implications and agreed to report back to the Board later in the municipal year.

## Fireworks Motion

As the proposer of the question at Full Council on 26th January 2022, Councillor S. Douglas was invited to address the Board and explained that the use of fireworks was particularly distressing to animals and vulnerable residents within the District and that the use of fireworks, particularly in a private setting, were problematic.

The Cultural Services and Parks Manager explained that a decision had been made that a fireworks display would not take place this year in Sanders Park. Instead, a light show would be organised as it had been for the previous year.

Following the discussion, the following recommendation was made:

‘that Bromsgrove District Council encourages residents to attend professionally organised firework displays and, in private settings, encourages the use of low noise or visual fireworks only.’

On being put to the vote the recommendation was carried by the Board.

This recommendation was presented to the Cabinet by the Chairman of the Board at their meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2022. A slight amendment was proposed by Councillor Thompson as follows:

*‘that Bromsgrove District Council, through its social media and other channels, encourages its residents to attend professionally organised firework displays and, in private settings, encourages the use of low noise or visual fireworks only.’*

The amended recommendation as outlined above was agreed by the Cabinet.

## **WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (HOSC)**

The Council's representative on this Committee must be a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and is required to provide the Board with regular updates on the work being carried out.

The Board's representative for the start of the municipal year was Councillor J. Till, however at the Board meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2021, Councillor Till indicated that she wished to step down from her role as HOSC representative. At this same meeting a nomination was received for Councillor S. Baxter and on being put to the vote it was agreed that Councillor S. Baxter be elected as HOSC representative for the remainder of the municipal year.

During the year Councillor Baxter highlighted the following areas and responded to questions from Members:

- Mental Health provision in Worcestershire
- Maternity Services in the Worcestershire
- Community ambulances and Primary Care (GP) Access within Worcestershire
- Integrated Cares Systems (ICS)
- Winter Plan 2021-2022.

## **WORKING GROUPS – UPDATE**

### **Background to Working Groups**

*Following the review of the work of the Board at the April 2016 meeting, a number of areas of improvement were discussed. One of these was its role in scrutinising the budget and the other was the role of performance monitoring. It was agreed that for 2016/17 the Board would set up a Finance and Budget Working Group and a Measures Dashboard Working Group. This would enable a dedicated group of Members to consider these areas in both more detail and in a timelier manner. This would enable Members to feed through any recommendations to Cabinet more promptly. In the first year of its implementation the Measures Dashboard Working Group was re-named the Corporate Performance Working Group.*

*The terms of reference for each Working Group were agreed by the Board and were regularly reviewed to ensure that the work being carried out remained relevant. Historically this review has formed part of the April meeting of the Board when it considers the annual report and looks back over the work carried out and discusses any improvements that could be made in the coming year to ensure the Board runs effectively and efficiently.*

*The Terms of Reference for the Working Groups were updated during the municipal year 2021-2022. The updates were as follows:*

### **Finance and Budget Scrutiny Working Group**

- *Named substitute Members may be invited to join the Working Group, however it should be chaired by a permanent Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Board*

### **Corporate Performance Working Group**

- *Named substitute Members may be invited to join the Working Group, however it should be chaired by a permanent Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, and:*
- *The Working Group will meet on a quarterly basis throughout the municipal year.*

### **Finance & Budget Working Group**

**Membership: Councillors C. A. Hotham (Chairman June 2021 – April 2022), Councillors S. R. Colella, R. Hunter, A. D. Kriss and J. Till**

This Group met on six occasions this year and the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Enabling has attended the majority of meetings, together with the Executive Director of Resources and the Head of Finance and Customer Services.

Heads of Service were also invited on a number of occasions in order to provide further information on their service areas, particularly in respect of Fees and Charges.

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

- 2022/23 Budget
- Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25
- Enterprise Resource System
- The Aged Debtors Summary
- The Financial Outturn Report
- Covid-19 Grants
- Blue Badge Motion which had been submitted by Councillor S. Robinson at the Full Council meeting held on 3rd November 2021
- Council Tax Empty Homes Discounts and Premiums report
- Fees and Charges

Once again, by being able to consider a number of reports in more detail and prior to their consideration at Cabinet, this has allowed Members of the Board via the Working Group to play an increased part in the budget setting process.

### **Corporate Performance Working Group**

During the municipal year 2021-2022 nominations were received for the election of the Chairman of this working group. Councillor Till was nominated at the Board meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021, and efforts were made by the Democratic Services team to arrange for volunteer Members as per the new Terms of Reference. Only two Councillors volunteered to be members of this group for the next municipal year however the Terms of Reference state that the group should consist of a maximum of 5 Members with a quorum of 3.

It was with this in mind, given the lack of membership of the group, that the most appropriate way forward when scrutinising the Performance of the Council would be to consider an item at the main Board meetings every 6 months.

This first item in the municipal year 2022-2023 will be the Performance Dashboard Update and would be included on the Board's work programme for consideration on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

## **TASK GROUP INVESTIGATIONS & SHORT, SHARP REVIEWS CARRIED OUT**

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

### **Equalities Task Group**

**Membership: Councillors P. McDonald, A.B Beaumont, M. Glass, H. Jones, A. Kriss, H. Rone-Clarke, C. Spencer and J. Till**

The outcome on the Equalities Task Group investigation can be found earlier in this report.

### **Impact of Review of Libraries in the District Task Group**

**Membership: Councillors S. R. Colella, S. Douglas, J. King, A. Kriss, M. Middleton and C. Spencer**

The outcome on the Impact of Review of Libraries in the District investigation can be found earlier in this report.

### **Review of Services to Prevent Flooding Task Group**

**Membership: Councillors R. Hunter, A.B. Beaumont, S. R. Colella, H. Rone-Clarke and C. Spencer**

The outcome on the Review of Services to Prevent Flooding Task Group investigation can be found earlier in this report.

## **Conclusion**

The return to in-person meetings at the beginning of this municipal year has meant that once again Members can consider reports in person. A significant amount of pre-scrutiny work has been carried out by the Board throughout the year. In addition to this, the work of the the Budget Scrutiny Working Group has been useful in providing Members with an opportunity to look at complex finance reports in some considerable detail. The conclusion of three task groups meant that 2021-2022 was a very busy and constructive year in scrutiny, whereby matters that were really important to the residents of Bromsgrove have been considered.



## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Board Meetings**

Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings are open to the public. To find out more visit our website at <http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/the-council/overview-and-scrutiny.aspx> or telephone 01527 881288 and ask to speak to the Democratic Services Officer.

### **Public Involvement**

If you would like to have your say on issues being considered by Overview and Scrutiny or to suggest a topic for consideration you can email [scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@bromsgrove.gov.uk) or complete the form on the Council's website at <http://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/council/the-council/overview-and-scrutiny/public-participation.aspx>

### **Giving Evidence**

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

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

### **Contact Overview and Scrutiny**

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

## **Overview and Scrutiny**

## **Legal, Equalities and Democratic Services**

## **Bromsgrove District Council**

**Parkside, Market Street, Bromsgrove B61 8DA**

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