



# Overview and Scrutiny **Annual Report**

**2023-2024**



**Bromsgrove**  
District Council

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# **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024**

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## **FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The first year of the new council has been a challenging one inasmuch as the number of task groups and the workload in general. In addition, the Board managed to deliver the most significant changes to the constitution efficiently and on time.

There is no doubt the following year will be just as challenging which will require the number of meetings to increase to ensure scrutiny is carried out in an efficient and robust manner.

I would like to thank all members of the Board that have committed their time and energy to the tasks we were confronted with and of course all those who took part in task groups.

I also realise the amount of work this has placed on our officers and hopefully capacity in this area will increase in the coming year, in recognition of the officer's workload.

**Councillor Peter McDonald**  
**Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

We are pleased to present the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report which outlines our work during 2023-2024 (this covers the municipal year from May 2023 to April 2024) 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 P. M. McDonald  
(Chairman)**



**Councillor S. T. Nock  
(Vice-Chairman)**



Councillor A. Bailes



Councillor R. Bailes



Councillor A. M. Dale



Councillor E. M. S. Gray



Councillor R. J. Hunter



Councillor B. Kumar



Councillor S. A. Robinson



Councillor H. D. N. Rone-Clarke



Councillor J. D. Stanley

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Meetings**

Throughout 2023-24, Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings had been taking place in person and were open to the public to attend at Parkside Hall in Bromsgrove. Meetings are live streamed if there is significant local interest in the items being considered at Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings. Meetings of scrutiny Task Groups and Working Groups continue to be held remotely, since these meetings are private.



## **REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE BOARD**

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

During the course of the year the Board had made a number of recommendations. There has been continued support from the relevant Portfolio Holders this year, with regular attendance at Overview and Scrutiny meetings in relation to reports concerning Portfolio Holders' areas of responsibility. This has given the Portfolio Holders 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/or supported recommendations which were then considered by Cabinet at its meetings.

**6<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Board Annual Report 2022-23**

The Annual Report detailed and summarised the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Board in 2022-23, including the recommendations made by the Board to Cabinet throughout the year.

It was noted that 2022-23 saw a greater proportion of Overview and Scrutiny Board recommendations being accepted by Cabinet than was the case in the previous few years. It was highlighted that scrutiny had an important role in reviewing the progress of the Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund projects taking place in Bromsgrove District. It was also noted that in 2022-23 the Overview and Scrutiny Board had concluded one task group review in respect of fuel poverty.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Board – Recommendation Tracker for 2022-23**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board Recommendations Tracker for 2022-23 was presented for Members' consideration and it was noted that the purpose of the tracker was to record the recommendations that the Board made to Cabinet throughout the year and to track the status of these recommendations.

### **Notice of Motion – Request to Investigate**

This item followed a motion agreed unanimously at the Annual Council meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023 calling for “the Overview and Scrutiny Board to prepare a report regarding the transition of the Council from a Cabinet System to that of a Committee System. The report to be presented to an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council to be held in September.”

The Overview and Scrutiny Board agreed to nominate Councillor P. M. McDonald as the Chairman of the Governance Systems Review Task Group, and agreed that the remaining four positions on the Task Group be allocated equally to all political groups represented on the Council (i.e. 1 position per political group).

### **Finance and Budget Working Group – Membership Report**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board appointed the Chairman and Members to the Finance and Budget Working Group. It was noted that the Chairman of the Group had traditionally been the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and Members agreed that this arrangement should continue for 2023-24.

It was noted that in addition five additional members of the Board plus the Chairman of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee would be represented on the Finance and Budget Working Group as per the Terms of Reference. The Members appointed to the Finance and Budget Working Group were: Councillor P. M. McDonald (Chairman), Councillor D. J. Nicholl (as Chairman of Audit, Standards and Governance Committee, and Councillors A. Bailes, R. J. Hunter, S. T. Nock, S. A. Robinson, and H. D. N. Rone-Clarke.

**10<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

### **Governance Systems Review – Presentation from Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS)**

The Representative from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny delivered a detailed presentation on the governance system options available to local authorities. The Board was advised that no governance system was inherently better or worse but instead the right governance option for an authority depended on local circumstances.

The main features of governance systems available to local authorities in England were outlined including potential advantages and disadvantages of choosing each option.

The legal process of implementing changes to the governance arrangements of a local authority was discussed. Members were informed that the Localism Act provided local authorities with the option to change their governance arrangements and there were two ways through which local authorities could make the change which were outlined.

There was a detailed discussion with respect of the presentation including about the possibility of reverting back to a previous governance system – it was explained in this regard that a period of five years would need to elapse before a change back could be made, if the original decision was made through a full council resolution, and a period of ten years would need to pass if the original change was decided through a referendum. However, in the second case, any decision to revert back to previous governance arrangements could only be made via a referendum.

It was also discussed the position on making adjustments within an existing governance system model – It was noted that legislative requirements regarding governance system changes would not be relevant if the authority opted to retain a governance model but adapted some processes and constitutional arrangements within an existing system (i.e. adopted a limited hybrid model for example). Therefore, the authority would not need to wait for five years (or ten years in case of referendum option) before making another governance change. This applied as long as no change was made to the governance system arrangement itself.

### **Scrutiny Investigation Proposal – Blue Badge Holders Parking**

A detailed presentation was provided on the current system for Blue Badge holders parking and income projections for the Council if free parking to Blue Badge holders was offered.

Following the presentation, arguments were provided by Members as to the potential advantages and disadvantages of offering the free parking as well as discussion about the evidence of need for free Blue Badge parking.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board decided to refer the proposal for free Blue Badge Holder parking for further discussion by the Finance and Budget Working Group (a sub-group of the Overview and Scrutiny Board).

### **Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan – Pre-Scrutiny**

The Deputy Chief Executive Officer provided a presentation on the Corporate Peer Challenge – Action Plan and in doing so explained that the report contained the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Review Challenge feedback and six key recommendations, together with the Council's written response to those recommendations.

It was highlighted that the Corporate Peer Challenge provided an opportunity and to consider and reflect on areas of improvement and for both the shared service authorities, Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils. The Corporate Peer Challenge was requested by Bromsgrove District Council at its full Council meeting in December 2022, primarily in response to the Section 24 notice (for non-delivery of financial statements for 2020-21).

The Bromsgrove District Council's Peer Challenge Review had a specific focus on corporate governance. It was highlighted that a separate piece of work was undertaken by the Bromsgrove Audit Standards and Governance Committee (through the Audit Task Group) concerning learning points from the Section 24 Notice and this was an area the Corporate Peer Challenge Review did not investigate. The Peer Review did consider issues of clarity, transparency and speed of decision making within the Council's governance arrangements and this included examination of the role and impact of overview and scrutiny.

## **Finance and Budget Working Group – Update**

A verbal report was provided of the meeting of Finance and Budget Working Group that took place on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023. It was reported that the Group discussed the Council's procurement processes in light of the Government's New Procurement Bill, which was currently progressing through Parliament, and what the Council needed to do to ensure it complied with the Bill. It was reported that the main item of discussion with respect of this was in relation to the Council's key decision threshold. The authority's current key decision threshold was £50,000 and any procurement above had to be reported via a full report to Cabinet.

It was noted that this key decision thresholds was unusually low compared to many authorities, and as there were a large number of procurements that crossed the threshold and not enough resources, including officer resource, there were instances where reports were not being submitted for all procurements above the key decision threshold. It was therefore proposed in the Approval to Spend report going to Cabinet that the key decision threshold be raised to £200,000 as this would ensure the level was compatible with that of most local authorities across the country and would enable the Council to have the necessary resource to ensure that reports were produced for all key decisions. It was outlined that information about all procurements above £500 was published on the Council's website.

The Group also looked at the Burcot Lane Housing Development. It was noted that the Group concluded that the sale of the development to a housing company owned by the District Council was the best way forward in relation to the 37 private rented units in the development. These would be put on for rent at market value. The specific arrangements associated with the housing company meant that the right to buy would not apply to these units which enabled the Council to retain ownership of these properties through the company in the longer term and thereby fill the gap in the Bromsgrove private rental market.

It was reiterated that the primary aim of the Council's housing strategy was to provide housing to Bromsgrove residents rather than making a profit in the short term. The houses were built to enable people to stay in the local area and Members opined that Bromsgrove District residents should be prioritised in terms of getting a home in the District.

**11<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

## **Grass Verges Maintenance – Pre-Scrutiny**

It was noted that this Cabinet report followed the Council motion of 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022, where it was agreed to change the approach to management of verges to allow wildflowers to remain in bloom during the height of the season when bees, butterflies and general small wildlife rely on the pollen from wildflowers to flourish.

It was noted that this would not be a one size fits all approach, instead the Council would work with local residents and elected members to find an approach that worked in each community.

It was proposed that to meet the requirements of this Full Council motion, a cyclical mowing regime would be maintained on approximately 70 per cent of highway verges and open spaces with up to 30 per cent of grass areas potentially left to grow naturally during May, June and July to support wildlife that relied on pollen from wildflowers.

There would be a capital and revenue investment required to implement the new regime. It was detailed that the additional capital investment that was requested for 2023/24 financial year would be reduced from £62,100 to £32,100 as decision on whether a second flail deck mower was needed would be made in the 2024/25 financial year. The capital investment detailed above would support reduction in budget for the existing mowing fleet at an estimated saving of £34,000 on the capital replacement budget over the next three years.

Revenue investment required to support the delivery of the grass cutting programme would be £28,000 per year over the next three financial years.

### **Governance Systems Task Group – Final Report**

The final report of the Governance Systems Task Group was submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Board. It was noted that the Task Group had been established as a result of a Motion agreed at a Full Council meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023. The membership of the Task Group consisted of five Members from all parties across the Council. There would be an opportunity for all elected members to consider the report and the recommendations at an Extraordinary meeting of the Council on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

During a detailed discussion, the Board considered various points, including a proposal to reconvene the Task Group to consider evidence from at least one second tier local authority that had a committee system before the it finalised its recommendation(s). This recommendation was lost on being put to the vote.

Members also discussed the need to embed any governance change. In this regard, Members were discussed the length of time any proposed change in governance structure would have to be in place for. Most Members felt that the hybrid Leader and Cabinet suggested in the Final Report should be in place for at least a four year period. Officers explained that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) could be put in place as part of any agreed changes. The MoU would be introduced between all political group leaders to agree in principle to maintain the arrangements agreed for at least the next four years.

Following the discussion, it was RECOMMENDED that:

*Bromsgrove District Council should have a hybrid Leader and Cabinet governance model from May 2024 onwards. To achieve this model, the Council should do the following:*

- a) *Agree changes to the Council's constitution during the 2023/24 municipal year, as detailed in the report.*

- b) *Introduce working protocols designed to embed more collegiate working in the Council's governance culture.*
- c) *Introduce Cabinet Advisory Panels.*
- d) *Take action to improve communication with Members.*
- e) *Introduce a Memorandum of Understanding between all political group leaders to maintain these working arrangements for at least the next four years.*

The final report recommendations were subsequently considered by Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The Cabinet recommended an additional recommendation to those listed above. The final set of recommendations at the Extraordinary Meeting of Council on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023 was as follow:

*RESOLVED that Bromsgrove District Council should have a hybrid Leader and Cabinet governance model from May 2024 onwards. To achieve this model, the Council should do the following:*

- a) *Agree changes to the Council's constitution during the 2023/24 municipal year, as detailed in the report.*
- b) *Introduce working protocols designed to embed more collegiate working in the Council's governance culture.*
- c) *Introduce Cabinet Advisory Panels.*
- d) *Take action to improve communication with Members.*
- e) *Introduce a Memorandum of Understanding between all political group leaders to maintain these working arrangements for at least the next four years, and*
- f) *A review to take place after 6 months by the Overview and Scrutiny Board (following implementation).*

### **Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Update**

Councillor B. Kumar was appointed as the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2023/24 municipal year.

**16<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

### **Agile Working Presentation**

A presentation on the Council's Agile Working policy was provided. It was explained that the policy was launched in June 2023 and applied to all permanent and fixed term contracted employees of the Council. There were clear parameters within the policy and at service level to ensure that agile working was adjusted as and when required to ensure that it did not impact negatively on the priority objective of serving residents.

Three key areas had been covered since the launch of the policy – customers, staff, and infrastructure. The project team were working with service managers to ensure that the policy was adopted and working. Fourth tier managers were being surveyed and that would be followed up with meetings to explore operational models, policies

and procedures, staff training and development, communication, infrastructure, and service measures. The Council remained committed to supporting staff health and wellbeing whilst working in a different way.

It was noted that a small project team had taken on board feedback about Members' about officer responsiveness to Members. This would be reported to the Strategic Management Team. It was emphasised that officers must be responsive and proactive to Members.

It was emphasised that customers remained at the heart of how the Council's services operated whilst officers were developing and implementing the agile working policy.

### **Community Shop Provision in the District – Overview**

The Board received a presentation on food bank provision across the District. Details of the known organisations that were running foodbanks and/or community supermarkets in the District were given, together with known statistics about the number of users, referral models and other details.

Following the discussion, Members agreed that it would be appropriate to establish a Task Group to investigate the food banks provision in the District, including what models of operation could work best in the District.

### **Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Update**

The Representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), Councillor B. Kumar, provided an update on the items discussed by HOSC at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023. This included Hillcrest Mental Health Ward, Children's Services (paediatric audiology), and Health Services Winter Planning.

**20<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

### **Governance Systems Review – Implementation Progress Update**

Details of the work undertaken to date by officers to implement the recommendations made by the Governance Systems Task Group were provided.

Members were asked to approve (for recommendation to Cabinet and Full Council) the draft terms of reference for the Cabinet Advisory Groups and the cross-party Memorandum of Understanding in respect of the hybrid Leader and Cabinet governance arrangements.

It was highlighted that the role of Cabinet Advisory Groups would be clearly distinct from that of the challenge committees - the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee. It was also noted that if approved the dates for the meetings of Cabinet Advisory Groups would be built into the 2024-25 meetings calendar.

During consideration of this item, the Board requested that some amendments be made to both the proposed terms of reference for the Cabinet Advisory Groups and the cross-party Memorandum of Understanding. It was agreed that the following should be recommended:

- 1) *The terms of reference for the Cabinet Advisory Group be approved, subject to addition of Paragraph 12 which would read as follows: “Memorandum of Understanding also applies”.*
- 2) *The proposed Memorandum of Understanding concerning cross party working be approved, subject to an amendment to point 5 of the Principles section to read as follows: “Recognise and respect that each individual member can contribute to decisions that are taken and should be involved and able to provide their opinion before a decision is taken”.*

These recommendations were subsequently considered at meetings of Cabinet (22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023) and full Council (6<sup>th</sup> December 2023) and a slightly amended wording to these recommendations was agreed as follow:

- 1) *The terms of reference for the Cabinet Advisory Groups be approved, subject to addition of Paragraph 12 which would read as follows: “Memorandum of Understanding also applied when taking part in a Cabinet Advisory Group”; and*
- 2) *The proposed Memorandum of Understanding concerning cross party working be approved, subject to an amendment to point 5 of the Principles section to read as follows: “Recognise and respect that each individual Member can contribute to decisions that are taken and should be given the opportunity to be involved and able to provide their opinion before a decision be taken.”*

### **Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Update**

The Representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), Councillor B. Kumar, provided an update with respect of the HOSC meeting which took place on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023. It was reported that the main item on the agenda at that meeting was a 12 month review of Public Health.

### **Agile Working Policy – Progress Brief on Addressing Queries Raised at the Last Meeting**

A response to Members’ questions with regard to the Agile Working Policy was provided in the form of a briefing note. The responses were discussed and a number of actions were requested which included:

- To receive updates on the work of Business Improvement Team to look at the best ways the Council could collect feedback and measure satisfaction across all customer facing services;
- Investigate how Bromsgrove District Council could link up services with Worcestershire County Council to enable a more seamless experience for residents;



- Provide a list of the agreed and statutory response times that Council Officers were bound by when responding to members of the public;
- Enquire into the possibility of regular data on response times to be shared as part of the Council's suite of performance measures;
- Make induction / key contact documents available to Members on Microsoft Teams in addition to the current formats;
- Investigate how to make better use of Microsoft Teams for Member-Staff communication in general.

### **Food Bank and Community Supermarket Provision Task Group – Membership Report**

The following membership of this task group was agreed: Councillors A. Bailes, E. M. S. Gray, B. Kumar, P. M. McDonald, D. J. Nicholl, and D. G. Stewart.

### **Notice of Motion – Request to Investigate – Future of Libraries within the District**

It was agreed that Worcestershire County Council Cabinet Portfolio Holder with responsibility for library provision be invited to a meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Board when a presentation on this subject would be provided.

**16<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

### **Parking Enforcement – Service Level Agreement with Wychavon District Council**

The Board considered a presentation on the parking enforcement service level agreement arrangements with Wychavon District Council (WDC). It was stated that WDC currently had responsibility over management and enforcement of On and Off-Street Parking in Bromsgrove District in addition to administrative functions around enforcement. The report as presented proposed that WDC would continue to provide parking enforcement and management service for Bromsgrove for a period of 5 years from April 2024. The report also asked that the Council's existing yearly budget for parking enforcement and management service of £242,000 be increased to £335,000 from April 2024. The proposed draft service level agreement was included as an appendix to agenda documents.

Members discussed the proposed service level agreement and expressed concerns about the proposal, raising concerns over current level of parking enforcement service delivered in the District, particularly in outlying wards. Members reported that they were receiving regular complaints from residents about anti-social parking, particularly in hotspot locations, and were therefore aware of the locations where parking enforcement was particularly needed. Members requested that they be involved in compiling a list of hotspot locations for parking enforcement and noted that a regular forum for Members meeting with parking wardens was needed.

Following a detailed discussion, the Board recommended that:

*With regard to the parking enforcement service the Cabinet consider the following options: a) go out to tender for the parking enforcement contract; b) have the service delivered in-house.*

Cabinet considered the proposals and agreed it would be useful for the Cabinet and Officers to explore both options proposed by the Board as part of the authority's review of parking arrangements. For this reason, Members of Cabinet suggested that the word "and" should be added to the wording of the proposal to ensure that the viability of both options would be investigated further.

After the Overview and Scrutiny Board had looked at this parking enforcement report in detail and after this consideration Cabinet was of the opinion that a strategic assessment was required in order to determine what requirements for parking enforcement service were needed.

It was agreed by Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024 that:

- 1) A strategic review of requirements for parking services including on and off street enforcement, be undertaken. This review would provide a Business Case based on options that would consider agreement of a longer-term SLA with WDC, tendering all or part of the service, in house delivery of the service or other options to be brought back to Cabinet for further consideration.*
- 2) Delegation be given to the interim Head of Environmental and Housing Property Services following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Regeneration, and the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services to agree a shorter-term (18 month) SLA with WDC with an appropriate end/term to enable recommendation 1 above to take place*

### **Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Update**

The Representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), Councillor B. Kumar, provided an update with respect of the HOSC meeting which took place on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024. It was reported that the main item on the agenda at that meeting were the Health Care System Plans to reduce inappropriate admissions to hospital. A detailed discussion took place including routes for patients to avoid hospital admissions. It was noted that in the current system, with backlogs in the primary care, it was impossible for many patients to avoid going to emergency department, even with the best will and effort of patients to avoid that route. It was noted that, for example, phoning NHS 111 often resulted in people being directed back to emergency department. It was commented that there was a need for more local treatment centres for minor illnesses as this would contribute to reducing demand on Accident and Emergency (A&E).

### **Governance Systems Review – Implementation Progress Update**

Members were informed that in line with proposals detailed in the Governance Systems Task Group there were budget implications arising from this report to fund an additional Democratic Services Officer post at a cost of £40,000 per annum.

Recruitment of this Officer was subject to approval of this budget bid in the Medium Term Financial Plan Tranche 2 report.

This proposal was approved by full Council as part of the MTFP budget paper on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024.

### **Finance and Budget Working Group – Update**

The Chairman noted that a discussion concerning Ward Councillor Funds took place at the 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024 meeting of Finance and Budget Working Group the Group agreed that a proposal be put forward for discussion to Overview and Scrutiny Board regarding a fund of £62,000 per year to be established for Councillor Ward Budgets from 2024-25 financial year for a period of three years. The briefing paper containing a draft Bromsgrove Ward Councillor Fund pilot scheme was included in supplementary papers for this meeting, and paper copies were tabled for Members' consideration.

A detailed debate took place on the proposal. Some Members expressed concern about the possible introduction of this fund, citing the fact that the County Council divisional ward funds were not being spent to their full capacity. It was suggested that the arrangement that existed at the Council via the New Homes Bonus (NHB) Community Grants Panel would be a more appropriate solution. Through the Grants Panel, members of the public were able to apply for funding for community projects directly and applications were examined by Members who sat on the Panel. It was noted that the proposal for ward budgets as tabled would provide funds directly to elected members to spend.

Other Members thought that as detailed in the draft Ward Councillor Fund pilot scheme, there would be stringent oversight of the funding requests by ward members and a clear audit trail would be kept and requests closely monitored. Any funding request under the scheme would need to be made in writing by the Member and would need to be approved before funds could be released. The funding requests would also need to clearly evidence what the funding provided would be spent on. Spending would be open to scrutiny by the public via the Council's website. It was also noted that there were many local community projects such fund could be used for. Examples were given of helping local clubs with purchasing items of sports equipment or setting up an afterschool youth club.

Following a debate, the Board RECOMMENDED that:

*the Cabinet consider, as part of the 2024/5 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Tranche 2, approval of the Ward Budgets proposal contained in the briefing paper now submitted, as tabled at the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024.*

The Cabinet gave consideration to the recommendation and recommended to the full Council that this budget proposal should be accepted.

At the Full Council meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024, as part of the approved Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-25 (Tranche 2), it was agreed that for years 2024-25 to 2026-27:

*“a new Earmarked Reserve for Ward Budgets be set up and £234k allocated to it.”*

(Medium Term Financial Plan (including Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision and Investment Strategy) (Tranche 2)), Resolution (6), Minute No. 96/23, Meeting of Council, Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024)

## 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024

### **Libraries Provision – Worcestershire County Council Presentation**

The Deputy Leader of Worcestershire County Council (WCC) was in attendance alongside Officers from WCC to provide a presentation on the implementation of Libraries Unlocked project and answer questions from Members of Overview and Scrutiny Board.

In the course of a detailed presentation and debate, some of the main points noted were that:

- Formal public consultation on library transformation options was undertaken in 2018-19. 2000 responses were received in addition to feedback from public meetings held across all libraries in the county. The Libraries Unlocked scheme was therefore based on and informed by customer feedback expressed in the consultation, particularly with regard to addressing barriers to customers using libraries when unstaffed and best times of day for libraries to be unstaffed.
- There were 21 libraries in Worcestershire of which 2 (Droitwich and Stourport) were adopters of the Libraries Unlocked in phase 1 of the scheme. As part of phase 2, a further 12 libraries would be considered for adoption of the Libraries Unlocked scheme.
- It was highlighted that the implementation of Libraries Unlocked at each location would be determined after a detailed stakeholder engagement, cost-benefit analysis, and formal staff consultation. It was noted that additional feasibility work was required to determine whether Libraries Unlocked could be implemented in libraries operating under Private Finance Initiative (PFI) arrangements, which applied to Alvechurch, Wythall, and Hagley libraries.
- Impact of Library Unlocked on staff including experienced librarians – It was noted that in all County libraries, all staff was experienced in customer service and library managers had to be qualified librarians. This would remain the case in libraries in which the Libraries Unlocked scheme would be introduced. In terms of staffing, the main impact for users would be that staff would be on hand for a reduced number of hours per week (and work reduced hours).
- It was reiterated that no library activities were proposed to be scrapped as part the Libraries Unlocked scheme. Individual libraries within the County retained discretion over timetabling library activities such as ‘bounce and rhyme’ sessions, the timetabling of which might be affected by the implementation of libraries unlocked.

- It was confirmed that the next phase would see Bromsgrove (Town) and Rubery libraries go ahead with the Libraries Unlocked scheme. In terms of staff hours and opening hours, it was confirmed that for Bromsgrove (town) library, staff hours would be reduced by 25 per cent and overall opening hours would increase by 50 per cent when Libraries Unlocked is introduced. For Rubery library, staff hours would reduce by 30 per cent but opening times increase by 106 per cent following Libraries Unlocked implementation. All libraries under Libraries Unlocked had an opening time of 72 hours per week.

### **Governance Systems Review – Implementation Progress Update**

It was noted that in 2023-24 Councillors from political groups not represented on the Cabinet were serving as Chairmen of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Board (which complied with national best practice). The Chairman of the Council was also from a political group not on Cabinet. These arrangements, however, were not currently a constitutional requirement.

It was reported that Members felt this needed to be formalized and the proposed amendments to the Committee Terms of Reference and the Council Procedure Rules, at Parts 5 and 8 of the constitution, were designed to enable the Council to continue in the future to appoint Councillors who are members of political groups not represented on the Council's Cabinet wherever possible.

It was stated that in the event that following future local elections insufficient numbers of opposition Members available to appoint to the positions of Chairmen of the Council, the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Board respectively, provisions were made in the proposed wording of the Committee Terms of Reference and Council Procedure Rules to enable other Councillors to be appointed to those positions, thereby ensuring that Council business could continue without disruption.

It was RECOMMENDED that:

- 1) *That the proposed amendments to the Committee Terms of Reference, at Part 5 of the Constitution, in respect of provisions as to the Chairmen of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Board, be approved as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report;*
- 2) *That the proposed amendments to the Council Procedure Rules, at Part 8 of the Council's Constitution, in relation to the appointments of the Chairman of the Council and the Chairmen of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Board, be approved, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.*

These recommendations were recommended for full Council approval by Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and subsequently approved by full Council on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024.

## **Playing Pitch Strategy – Pre-Scrutiny**

A report on playing pitch strategy was presented which covered the following aspects:

- How many playing pitch facilities there were in Bromsgrove?
- What was the quality of these facilities?
- Were these facilities accessible?
- What was the current demand?
- What was the future demand up to 2040?

It was explained that the Council worked with a consultancy to ensure the exercise was undertaken in an independent and unbiased manner. In addition, a team of national governing bodies had overseen this work and Sports England acted as a supervisor and was responsible for signing off the Strategy.

It was also explained that the purposes of the Playing Pitch Strategy document were:

- To provide confidence to the Leisure Team when taking actions on playing pitches.
- To support the local planning authority in making confident decisions about protecting / enhancing provision of playing pitches in Bromsgrove.

Following the presentation of the report, Members asked questions about specific playing pitches within the District and enquired into detail of how the Strategy would assist in determining how Section 106 developer contributions. It was clarified that agreement with regard to Section 106 contributions are determined at the planning approval stage, and not decided via a Strategy, which however provided an overall framework for identifying playing pitch need in the District.

Members also enquired into costs of the consultants' work on developing the Playing Pitch Strategy. It was noted that the costs of consultants and associated work was £50,000 of which circa a quarter was the cost of producing the Strategy document itself.

The recommendations of the report were endorsed by the Board.

## **Notice of Motion – Request to Investigate – Actions against the impact of Impending Heatwaves**

The Board agreed that a Short Sharp Review Group should be established to investigate actions that could be undertaken to protect residents from the impact of impending heatwaves. It was agreed that all Members be contacted with regard to joining the Short Sharp Review Group, with membership to be confirmed at the next meeting of the Board.

## **Levelling Up Funding Update**

An update report was provided in respect of the Levelling Up Funding (LUF) projects within the District. It was noted that the Council had been awarded £14.1m of LUF in 2022. In addition to this, the Council had added £1.6m of its own funding.

North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) provided overall programme management for the Bromsgrove LUF programme. Given the changes to this arrangement in the future, plans were to be put in place on how these programmes were to progress moving forward.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was to be signed with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) to undertake the Public Realm works.

Members were informed that Planning application for the Market Hall site was to be considered at a Planning meeting due to take place on 19th February 2024.

The present plan for the Market Hall site would result in a completed construction date of September 2025, which was six months after the present deadline for spending of any Government LUF Grant. The Council had been in communication with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to seek a six-month extension to this project. This was provisionally approved by DLUHC on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

(During consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

### **Termination of Shared Service Arrangement: North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration – Pre-Scrutiny**

The Board received a report which detailed proposals for the termination of the shared service for North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWeDR).

Members were informed that in the summer of 2023, the Leader of Wyre Forest District Council had approached the Leader of Bromsgrove District Council and the Leader of Redditch Borough Council, which also formed part of the shared service, to advise them of Wyre Forest District Council's intention to end the shared service agreement. This shared service had been in place for over 10 years and had provided economic development and regeneration services in the north of the county during this time.

Subsequent to this, Officers had been attending meetings with representatives of Wyre Forest District Council to discuss this matter further and, subject to an exit agreement between all parties, the shared service would cease to operate on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024. End of terms were still being negotiated and would need to address issues such as indemnity clauses.

The Board endorsed the following recommendations as printed in the report:

- 1) *To agree that the Collaboration Agreement relating to the Provision of Economic Development and Regeneration Services should be terminated mutually under clause 15.1 (Determination of this Agreement), with effect from 30 June 2024 and that a new Exit Agreement be entered into;*

- 2) *Delegate to the Executive Director (interim) following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration, and Executive Director Resources to negotiate, finalise and approve the Exit Agreement and to take any other steps that arose from the termination process; and*
- 3) *That an additional budget of £72,836 be approved for the new structure.*

Recommendations 1 and 2 were approved by Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024 (Minute No. 78/23 refers).

Recommendation 3 above was approved by Full Council on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024 (Minute No. 96/23 refers).

(During the consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed which related to the financial and business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and which related to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority).

## **11<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

### **Governance Systems Review – Implementation Progress Update**

It was reported that the next meeting of the Constitutional Review Working Group (CRWG) was due to take place on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024. Any recommendations arising from that meeting which relate to the outcomes of the Governance systems Task Group report would be reported for the consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Board at its April meeting.

Members queried when guidance would be released with respect of the Cabinet Advisory Group (CAG) and it was noted that this would be done in advance of the new municipal year.

### **Local Heritage List Strategy – Pre-Scrutiny**

The Local Heritage List Strategy report was presented. During the presentation it was highlighted that this report provided an update on progress of the Local Heritage List Strategy adopted in 2016. It was noted that there had been progress in compiling the list, however, issues were faced particularly in the public engagement element of the Strategy. The report therefore asked for an updated version of the Strategy to be approved.

Members' attention was drawn to the summary of the Local Heritage List Strategy contained within the report which included information regarding the value of heritage assets to local communities and that the Bromsgrove District Plan (2017)



acknowledged the importance of adopting a Local List to formerly identify the locally important heritage assets within the District.

Officers reported that the criteria for inclusion on the Local Heritage List had been identified, and included Age, Authenticity and Rarity, Architectural interest, Historic interest, and Townscape / Villagescape / Landscape interest. Of those criteria, it was stated that in order to be included on the List, assets needed to satisfy the first criteria stated above and at least one other.

The Principal Conservation Officer stated that heritage assets identified on a local list, would be recognised by the local authority as having heritage significance, and would therefore merit consideration in planning matters. When considering planning applications which impact on heritage assets on the local list, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) would be required to take a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset, in determining the application.

In terms of how the draft lists would be presented, Officers stated that there would be a half page summary of the heritage asset, which included a brief description, the assessment of criteria and a location map of the site.

It was noted that draft lists had been prepared in respect of Beoley, Alvechurch, Belbroughton and Dodford. These lists added 140 properties to the draft Local Heritage List, and cover a diverse range of properties including houses, schools, village halls, places of worship and canal infrastructure. Work was now underway to prepare draft lists on Bromsgrove, Lickey and Blackwell and Wythall.

Following the presentation of the report, Members scrutinised the report in detail. Disappointment was expressed at the lack of involvement of ward Members in identification of local heritage assets to date and a recommendation to Cabinet was made in that regard.

Members also proposed that the final list of heritage assets should be compiled within an 18-month timeframe which was also agreed as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Recommendations were therefore made to Cabinet as follow:

- 1) That District Ward Councillors be directly involved in the consultation process for the Local Heritage List (LHL) in their respective ward areas;*
- 2) That the final Local Heritage List (LHL) for Bromsgrove, covering the whole district, be completed and published within the next 18 months.*

These recommendations were considered and approved by Cabinet at their meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

### **Bromsgrove Centres Action Plan Review 2024-25 – Pre-Scrutiny**

The Bromsgrove Centres Action Plan Review 2024/25 was presented. It was highlighted that the Bromsgrove Centres Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2026 was approved by Members in January 2023. The Action Plan set out Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and success of the plan. These KPIs included budget monitoring, actions, and response for certain projects.

Outstanding actions from the previous action plan would be carried forward and continued in the 2024/25 municipal year.

Following the report presentation, Members had a number of queries concerning village centres outside of Bromsgrove Town Centre, the Shopwatch scheme and its effectiveness in catching shoplifters, the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) in Bromsgrove Town Centre and its effectiveness, and shop frontages enforcement among other matters. Following the debate, it was agreed to recommend to Cabinet that:

*the action plan be named 'Bromsgrove District Centres Action Plan' to emphasise that it is targeting centres in all wards of the District.*

This recommendation was accepted by Cabinet at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

### **Review of the work of North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership 2022-23**

Local authorities were required to scrutinise and review the work of the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership on an annual basis. At this meeting the work of the local crime and disorder reduction body, the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership (NWCSP), was scrutinised by the Board, focusing on the work undertaken by the Partnership in Bromsgrove District.

Members received a detailed presentation and held a detailed debate on the NWCSP, the core funding of NWCSP, and the grants available to the Partnership through the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and how they had been spent within Bromsgrove District. An update was also received on the initiatives of the Partnership, including the Community Safety Project updates for 2023-24.

There was also a discussion regarding local initiatives, such as the Empowering Young People Project, Youth Outreach, Young Citizen's Challenge, Bromsgrove Youth Hub, and The Respect Programme.

### **Cost of Living Funding Proposal – Pre-Scrutiny**

A presentation was provided on the funding proposal with regard to the Cost of Living. It was reported that in 2020-21 the Council allocated £50,000 to support the Community Hubs initiative. Further allocations were made in 2021-22 and 2022-23 equalling a total budget of £150,000. It was confirmed that this budget was currently sat in earmarked reserves.

In February 2020, a budget was approved by Cabinet as a revenue bid to support the development of the Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Community Hubs in libraries initiative across the District. Following a new direction of travel by WCC, this budget was never provided to the County Council. Therefore, the £150,000 funding remained within reserves.

Due to the Cost of Living crisis, the report was asking for consideration to be given to awarding this funding towards a Cost-of-Living initiative. This followed a multi-agency Cost of Living Group was established with partners such as WCC, Bromsgrove District

Housing Trust (BDHT) and other partners. Following discussions at this group, two surveys were carried out, in order to better understand the specific needs of local communities. The findings from the survey highlighted that the crisis was affecting a broad range of residents not just those on benefits or a lower income.

It was proposed that the earmarked reserve be used for one-off investments of a Citizen's Advice specialist housing adviser at £52,000, voluntary sector money adviser at £32,000, and enhancing the support of the Council's Financial Inclusion at £42,000. This would be for a trial period of 14 months with a view to the trial period informing a lottery bid by the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to further sustain the work. If the lottery bid was successful any monies not spent on the project would be put back in to reserves.

Recommendations printed in the report were endorsed by the Board. On 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024 these recommendations were approved by Cabinet.

### **Finance and Budget Working Group – Update**

A verbal update was provided with respect of the Finance and Budget Working Group. It was noted that the last meeting of the Group took place on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024. It was reported that at the meeting Members were informed that there had been a continued improvement in staff turnover rates, which stood at only 8.8 per cent, significantly under the national average rate of staff turnover (15.6 per cent). The other issues highlighted by the Chairman included the Dolphin Centre redevelopment and the key decision threshold.

With reference to the Council's refuse fleet refurbishment, it was noted that there had been a reappraisal of costs. Officers explained that the company hired to undertake the refurbishment had struggled to refurbish the vehicles in time and there was now a backlog of vehicles waiting to be refurbished. It was reported that it was more viable in this context to purchase new vehicles rather than undertake refurbishment works. It was agreed that a briefing note on this subject would be submitted to the next Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting.

### **Impact of Heatwaves Short Sharp Review – Membership Report**

The Board agreed that Councillors S. Ammar, R. Baines, B. Kumar, M. Marshall, B. McEldowney, and J. Robinson be appointed to the Impact of Heatwaves Short Sharp Review Group. The terms of reference and chairmanship were due to be agreed at the first meeting of the Group.

### **Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Update**

The Representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), Councillor B. Kumar, provided an update with respect of the HOSC meeting which took place on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024. It was reported that the main item on the agenda at that meeting concerned General Practice across Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care System (ICS) area. It was reported that at that meeting data was provided on how many GP appointments were delivered but it was

found concerning that no distinction was made in the dataset between GP appointments within the last year were face-to-face and how many telephone consultations.

It was noted that patient satisfaction rates with GP services in Worcestershire were low compared to neighbouring counties / metropolitan boroughs and were continuing to decline in Worcestershire.

It was highlighted that a particular issue in Worcestershire was people being unable to get GP appointments being referred to 111. It was noted that there was no data available on how many GP patients who called 111 landing in A&E. The Representative highlighted that the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Primary Care Access Recovery Plan had two main ambitions: to tackle the '8am rush' and to enable patients to know on the day they contact their practice how their request will be managed.

## **22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024**

The Board is due to consider the following reports at this meeting:

- Agile Working Policy – Update on Implementation
- Local Heritage List Strategy – Update on Action Plan
- Cost of Parking Enforcement Review Update
- Council Fleet Options – Briefing Note
- Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)
- Interim Update on the Transfer of Economic Development Unit (EDU) from Wyre Forest District Council to Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils
- Governance Systems Review – Implementation Progress Update
- Foodbank Provision Task Group – Final Report
- Overview and Scrutiny Board Annual Report 2023-24

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

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

The Board's representative for the municipal year 2023-24 was Councillor B. Kumar.

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

- Mental Health provision in Worcestershire (including Hill Crest MH Ward)
- Children's Hearing Services
- Health Services Winter Planning
- Review of Public Health Function
- Health Care System Plans (including Urgent Community Response)
- West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) calls
- Community Ambulances and Primary Care (GP) Access within Worcestershire
- Access to GP appointments
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire Primary Care Access Recovery Plan

## **WORKING GROUPS – UPDATE**

In 2023-24 the Board continued to have a dedicated Finance and Budget Working Group. This enabled a dedicated group of Members to consider budgetary matters in both more detail and in a timelier manner and had also, when necessary, enabled Members to feed through any recommendations to Cabinet more promptly.

The terms of reference for the Finance and Budget Working Group were agreed by the Board prior to 2023-24. A review of the Working Groups, as part of the review of the overall Overview and Scrutiny Board function, will be carried out at the start of 2024-24 municipal year.

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

**Membership: (7) Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), R. Bailes, R. J. Hunter (stepped down October 2023), D. J. Nicholl, S. T. Nock, S. A. Robinson, H. D. N. Rone-Clarke.**

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

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

- 2024-25 Budget
- Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-25 to 2026-27 – Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 Reports
- Finance and Performance Monitoring Reports
- The Financial Outturn Report
- Council Tax Empty Homes Discounts and Premiums report
- Council Tax Support Scheme
- Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Relief Policy
- Council Tax and Business Rates Yield 2024-25
- Financial Recovery Plan
- Blue Badge Holders Parking Proposal
- Ward Funds Proposal

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

However, Members of Overview and Scrutiny Board felt that the budget reports (Medium Term Financial Plan Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 reports) should be considered as agenda items at main meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board from 2024-25.

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

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

### **Governance Systems Task Group**

**Membership: (5) Councillors P. M McDonald (Chairman), A. Bailes, R. J. Hunter, E. M. S. Gray, S. Nock**

The final report, recording the outcome of this Task Group's investigation can be found earlier in this report in the 'Reports Considered by the Board' section for the meeting of 11<sup>th</sup> September, Governance Systems Task Group – Final Report.

This report and its recommendations were subsequently approved at Cabinet and by Full Council at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The recommendations of the report are being implemented with the view for these to come into force at the start of the 2024-25 municipal year.

### **Foodbank and Community Supermarket Provision Task Group**

**Membership: (6) Councillors E. M. S. Gray (Chairman), A. Bailes, B. Kumar, P. M. McDonald, D. J. Nicholl, D. G. Stewart**

The final report for this Group is being finalized and is due to be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Board at its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024.

### **Impact of Heatwaves Short Sharp Review**

**Membership: (6) Councillors M. Marshall (Chairman), R. Bailes, S. Ammar, B. Kumar, B. M. McEldowney, J. W. Robinson**

This Short Sharp Review Group is currently ongoing. The next meeting of the Review Group is due to take place in the week commencing Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> April.

## **Conclusion**

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

During the year, one task group investigation (the Governance Systems Review) had been concluded with a further two task group investigations (Foodbank Provision and Impact of Heatwaves) underway or close to being concluded. Through the Governance Systems Task Group, Overview and Scrutiny has made a key contribution in proposing that the Council implement a hybrid Leader and Cabinet governance model. This change is due to be implemented from the start of 2024-25 municipal year. Overall, this was a constructive year for the Overview and Scrutiny function in Bromsgrove.

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## **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 <https://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, Democratic and Property Services**

### **Bromsgrove District Council**

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

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