

APPENDIX 2

Bromsgrove District Council – Actions taken to support Communication

Members are asked to note the following actions taken in response to the communications section of the Governance Systems Task Group’s final report.

Objective from Task Group final report	Actions taken
<p><i>Inclusive Member-led work programming in the Overview and Scrutiny process, whereby Members prioritise issues for investigation at the start of the municipal year. This should help to embed backbench Members’ greater involvement in policy development and critically challenging decisions taken by the Cabinet.</i></p>	<p>An Overview and Scrutiny training and work programming session took place on the evening of Wednesday 12th June 2024. The training was delivered by a representative of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS), which is the lead expert body nationally providing advice and guidance in respect of the Overview and Scrutiny process. During the session, Members identified a number of items to include on the Board’s work programme. In addition, items were identified which it was felt would be more suitable for consideration via all Member briefings, as the topics focused on sharing information for Members’ consideration. Briefings have subsequently been organised focusing on areas as diverse as biodiversity, street sweeping and food waste collection services.</p> <p>The Member Development Steering Group is responsible for co-ordinating Member training at the Council. The group will be invited to consider training requirements for 2025/26, including overview and scrutiny training, at forthcoming meetings.</p>
<p><i>Providing backbench Members with access to reports and other information in a timely manner to enable Overview and Scrutiny</i></p>	<p>Whilst the Access to Information Rules have not been amended and the Council cannot change statutory publication deadlines for agenda packs for public meetings, the timing of meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Board in relation to meetings of Cabinet have been reviewed in response to this point. In 2024/25, meetings of the Board were scheduled in the calendar of meetings for the municipal year to take place</p>

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<p><i>Members to effectively pre-scrutinise items on the Cabinet work Programme. This will entail amending the Access to Information rules at Part 9 of the constitution.</i></p>	<p>the day before the Cabinet meeting – previously meetings of the Board took place further in advance of the Cabinet meetings. This has helped to reduce the gap between publication of the main agenda for Board meetings and publication of any Cabinet reports that are due to be the subject of pre-scrutiny. Officers are currently reviewing the draft calendar of meetings for 2025/26 and are proposing that this arrangement, whereby the Board meets the day before Cabinet, should continue.</p>
<p><i>Continuing arrangements whereby group leaders share information with their Members at political group meetings.</i></p>	<p>Meetings of group leaders are booked to take place until the end of the municipal year and all group leaders are invited to attend these meetings. These meetings take place roughly once a month and are timed to occur prior to Cabinet meetings but after the agenda for the Cabinet meetings have been published. The aim is to ensure that group leaders have time to raise any points on behalf of their groups relating to items on the Cabinet agenda and to report back. Group leaders can also feed back to their groups at their respective group meetings.</p>
<p><i>Raising awareness of the support and resources available to Members through ongoing Member training. For example, the group referred to the availability of the modern.gov app which could be used by Members to access and annotate electronic copies of agenda packs</i></p>	<p>A comprehensive Member Training programme was organised for 2024/25, in line with the requirements of the Member Development Steering Group. Most training sessions are delivered in person but Members can attend training remotely on request (via Microsoft Teams).</p> <p>A training session focusing on using the modern.gov app was delivered by Democratic Services on 10th June 2024. One-to-one Member training, provided by Democratic Services, is also offered to Members on an ongoing basis.</p>

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	<p>The private modern.gov app includes a Library function, which can be used to view and access information in an electronic form in the same way that Members would access and annotate agenda packs using the app. Useful information has been published to the Library section, including the calendar of meetings, the Members' Code of Conduct and various planning policies. Additional information can be published by Democratic Services in the Library at Members' request.</p>
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