

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

19TH NOVEMBER 2024, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), S. T. Nock (Vice-Chairman), E. M. S. Gray, R. J. Hunter, B. Kumar, R. E. Lambert, D. J. Nicholl and J. D. Stanley

Observers: Councillor K. J. May - Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships and Enabling
Councillor S. J. Baxter - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Regeneration
Councillor H. D. N. Rone-Clarke

Officers: Mr P. Carpenter, Ms R. Egan, Mrs. C. Felton, Ms R. McElliott, Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill and Mrs S. Woodfield

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors A. Bailes, R.A. Bailes, A.M. Dale, S.R. Peters and S.A. Robinson.

It was noted that Councillor R.E. Lambert was in attendance as a substitute member for Councillor A.M. Dale and Councillor D.J. Nicholl was a substitute member for Councillor S.A. Robinson.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

No declarations of interest were received nor of any whipping arrangements.

51/23

HYBRID LEADER AND CABINET GOVERNANCE MODEL - SIX-MONTH REVIEW OF WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The six-month review of working arrangements (hybrid Leader and Cabinet governance model) report reviewed how the Hybrid Leader and Cabinet model of governance had been working at Bromsgrove District Council for the last six months.

A review of the Council's governance model was undertaken by the Governance Systems Task Group in 2023. The group's findings were reported at an extraordinary meeting of Council held on 20th September 2023 and the proposals detailed in the report were approved.

The key proposal detailed in the report was that the Council should have a Hybrid Leader and Cabinet model of governance moving forward. To enable this to be delivered, the recommendation was underpinned by six sub-proposals summarised as follows: -

1. That the changes to the constitution detailed in the October 2023 report be implemented.
2. That working protocols be introduced to embed more collegiate working.
3. That Cabinet Advisory Panels be introduced.
4. That action be taken to improve communications with Members.
5. That a Memorandum of Understanding between all political group leaders to maintain these working arrangements for at least the next four years be introduced.
6. That the arrangements be reviewed in six months' time by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Members were invited to consider the update provided and to note progress made. The following discussions were held by Members:

- There had been some good examples of opportunities for Member participation in the relevant meetings, however, some Members expressed the view that these were always constructive.
- The roles of Portfolio Holder surgeries. It was clarified that surgeries were provided to offer Member engagement and to ensure residents' voices could be heard.
- Member participation was very important during meetings.
- Officer participation was not considered a necessity for all meetings, therefore not adding additional strain on officer time and resources.
- The relevant meetings were a good opportunity for all party Members to be involved, providing a wealth of knowledge during debates.
- The role of Cabinet Advisory Groups (CAGs) was not to make decisions but to support Cabinet Members reviewing important strategic areas linked to the Council Plan.
- There had been a positive outcome of the Governance Task Group with the recommendation of an additional Democratic Services Officer. An officer had been recruited into this position in 2024 and Officers complimented her on the support she was providing to Members and the Board.
- It was suggested that Member's behaviour in meetings had improved since the review of the Council's governance model was completed. Harmony was more evident in Full Council meetings since the review.

- The intention of hybrid working was to encourage meetings to run more smoothly with backbenchers being provided with more information by Portfolio Holder to enhance the local democratic process.

During consideration of this item, a recommendation was proposed by Councillor R. Hunter. This recommendation was:

“To consolidate Cabinet Advisory Group (CAG) and Cabinet Surgery meetings to reduce the number and frequency of meetings.”

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor Hunter and seconded by Councillor D. Nicholl.

In proposing the recommendation, Councillor Hunter raised concerns about the impact that the increase in meetings arising from the introduction of CAG meetings, Cabinet surgeries and more Member Briefings had had on the workloads of officers. It was suggested that rationalisation of these meetings would help to reduce these pressures.

Members discussed the proposed recommendation. In doing so, it was noted that officers were not required to attend all of these meetings, in particular, Cabinet Member surgeries were only attended by Members. It was also noted that the meeting had been arranged as requested through the governance review but the frequency could be reviewed if required.

On being put to the vote the recommendation was lost.

An error was highlighted in the report which read “*the chairman of the Council shall not be a member of a political group represented on the **Council***”. It was agreed this was a typographical error and should read “*the chairman of the Council shall not be a member of a political group represented on the **Cabinet***”.

RESOLVED that the six-month review of governance arrangements in place at Bromsgrove District Council be noted.

52/23

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE

The Council’s Representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), Councillor B. Kumar, updated the Board on the matters discussed at its recent meeting held on Friday 11th October 2024.

Two items considered on the agenda included the update on cancer pathways and acute dermatology services.

During discussions about the Cancer Pathways the following were discussed:

- Prevention and supporting early cancer diagnosis
- Screening programme updates
- Cancer diagnosis and treatment
- Challenges with dermatology services
- Urological Cancer
- Lung Cancer Problems
- Living with and beyond Cancer

During discussions for Acute Dermatology Services the following were discussed:

- During 2022-23 the Trust saw more than 13,000 patients with severe inflammatory skin disease and cancer.
- During 2023-24 Consultant Dermatologists employed by Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust resigned en masse, as a result there was no data for dermatology service demand.
- Difficulties recruiting permanent staff which led to challenges in maintaining services and longer waiting times for some patients.
- The Trust had developed a partnership with Wye Valley Trust which would assist with recruitment, peer-support, mentoring and guiding.
- Since February 2024, a private sector insourcing provider, Health Harmonie had been providing services in Kidderminster Treatment Centre and Worcester Royal Hospital.

Following the presentation Members discussed a number of points:

- Pharmacies should be assisting with administering more vaccinations to patients to free up GPs' time. It was also felt that GPs receiving funding to administer vaccinations to patients perpetuated the problem with resources. The Council's Representative on HOSC advised that GPs did gain funding from vaccinations as it was part of their business model and that the points raised would be put to the HOSC Committee for comment. Some Members advised that they had received good patient care when requesting vaccinations through their GP, suggesting the issue was perhaps with individual GP surgeries.
- Members questioned whether there was an action plan for acute dermatology service issues and why there was such a shortage of medication. The Board suggested that with the presence of digitalisation, the Health Authority should have more effective IT systems in place, in particular, to assist with communication within different departments. In response it was felt that the patient pathway was insufficient with some consultants lacking empathy towards patients and that extra recruitment was being considered.
- Sharing knowledge and joined up thinking should be part of the Health Authorities' working practices to improve the health service.

RESOLVED that the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Update be noted.

53/23

HOUSING TASK GROUP UPDATE - PROPOSED ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVE

The Chairman of the Housing Task Group provided a summary to the Board regarding its first meeting held on 31st October 2024.

The Chairman felt the meeting went well, with positive engagement and discussions by all Members. Through the debate Members had suggested that a further area could be explored in more detail.

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board were therefore requested to consider the following as an addition to the Terms of Reference:

“To scrutinise the allocations policy and housing register regarding eligibility, qualification and allocations and explore standards of housing let under the policy”.

Members of the Board considered this proposal and in doing so noted that it would be sensible for the Task Group to consider this subject as part of their review.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The additional objective for the Housing Task Group investigation proposed by Members of the group be approved; and
- 2) The update in respect of the Housing Task Group investigation be noted.

54/23

FOODBANK AND COMMUNITY SHOP PROVISION TASK GROUP - PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO RECOMMENDATION

The Chairman of the Foodbank and Community Shop Provision Task Group presented to the Board. It was explained that the report detailed the background to, as well as the wording of, an amendment suggested by Cabinet to Recommendation 4 of the Foodbank and Community Shop Provision Task Group, the other recommendations from the group having been approved by Cabinet earlier in the year.

The original recommendation was “That the Council endeavour to investigate, under the auspices of existing arrangements available to the Council, such as the Bromsgrove Partnership, whether communities in areas of the district that do not currently have foodbanks require this provision, and that the Council make best effort to create a food bank in Rubery where a need has already been identified”.

The proposed amendment was “That the Council endeavour to investigate, under the auspices of existing arrangements available to the Council, such as the Bromsgrove Partnership, whether communities in areas of the district that do not currently have foodbanks require this

provision, and that the Council make best effort *to support the local community and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)* to create a food bank in Rubery where a need has already been identified”.

The Board agreed to endorse the proposed change to the wording of the Food Bank Task Group’s fourth recommendation.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The suggested amendment to the wording of the Task Group’s Recommendation 4 be endorsed.

RECOMMENDED that

- 2) the Council endeavour to investigate, under the auspices of existing arrangements available to the Council, such as the Bromsgrove Partnership, whether communities in areas of the district that do not currently have foodbanks require this provision, and that the Council make best effort to support the local community and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to create a food bank in Rubery where a need has already been identified”.

55/23

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

There was no Finance and Budget Group update for this meeting.

56/23

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Officer informed Members of two additions to the Cabinet Work Programme since the last Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting which were as follows:

- Bromsgrove Local Heritage which was going to be considered by Cabinet on 10th December 2024 and would be pre-scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9th December 2024.
- Disabled Facility Grant Ombudsman's Report which was going to Cabinet on 7th January 2025.

RESOLVED that the content of the Cabinet Work Programme be noted as per the preamble above.

57/23

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD - ACTION SHEET

The Assistant Director of Regeneration and Property Services asked Members to note that although there was no specific deadline for use of the Council’s Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) funding, the matter was in consideration and progress being made.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Action sheet be noted.

58/23

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Board work programme was considered by Members.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

59/23

TO CONSIDER, AND IF CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE, TO PASS THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING DURING THE CONSIDERATION OF ITEM(S) OF BUSINESS CONTAINING EXEMPT INFORMATION:

RESOLVED: that under Section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act, as amended, the relevant paragraph of that part, in each case, being as set out below and that it is in the public interest to do so:-

<u>Item No</u>	<u>Paragraph</u>
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60/23

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 17TH OCTOBER 2024

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 17th October 2024 were considered.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 17th October 2024 be agreed as a true and correct record.

61/23

LEVELLING-UP FUND PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the newly appointed Assistant Director of Regeneration and Property Services and Regeneration Project Delivery Manager to Members.

The Assistant Director of Regeneration and Property Services informed Members that there had been lots of progress since the last Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

The Regeneration Project Delivery Manager presented the Levelling-Up Fund Programme update to Members. The report sought to update Members on the progress of the schemes at the Windsor Street site, Public Realm works, Former Market Hall, Risk Registers and how risks would be mitigated. The report was also seeking Members' approval to agree that the frequency of updates to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in respect of Levelling Up be quarterly.

Following the presentation, Members made a number of comments:

- Questions were raised as to whether a breakdown of costs could be provided to the Board. The Deputy Chief Executive responded and explained the funding breakdown to the Board.
- It was suggested that reference to the climate change implications made in the report should be considered in more detail. It was agreed by the relevant Officers that this would be reviewed.
- Questions were raised as to why the report had not been signed off by the Legal Services Department. Members were reassured that the Legal Services Team were aware of the report content but unfortunately sign off wasn't sought in time.
- The Board requested that dates when quarterly report would be scheduled, should be provided to Members in advance. Officers agreed that this would be carried out.

Following discussions the Chairman asked the Board to consider the details within the report and also to the proposal for a quarterly update as opposed to every Board meeting.

RESOLVED that

- 1) the work undertaken to date detailed within the report be noted.
- 2) updates to the Overview and Scrutiny Board on the subject of Levelling up be considered on a quarterly basis.

(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 of exempt matters 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)).

Overview and Scrutiny Board
19th November 2024

The meeting closed at 7.03 p.m.

Chairman