

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

25TH MARCH 2025, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Observers: Councillor B. M. McEldowney

Other Attendees: Mr N. Moon and Mr R. Church (Applied Resilience)

Officers: Mr. G. Revans, Ms. M. Worsfold and Mrs S. Woodfield

103/23

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor S.A. Robinson with Councillor J.W. Robinson in attendance as named substitute.

104/23

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor J. Robinson declared a pecuniary interest in relation to Minute Item No. 110/24 – Cabinet Work Programme – due to his appointment as County Councillor at Worcestershire County Council (WCC).

105/23

UPDATE ON HEATWAVES PREPAREDNESS (IMPACT OF HEATWAVES TASK GROUP RECOMMENDATION)

Mr N. Moon, Chief Executive and Mr R. Church, Incident Management & Resilience Specialist of Applied Resilience (AR) presented an update on Heatwaves Preparedness to the Board.

The topics discussed included updates on Heatwaves at the Local Resilience Forum Level, Cools Hubs, Plans, Warning and Informing, Priority Services Register, Business Continuity Plans and Training.

Following the presentation, the Chairman of the Impact of Heatwaves Task Group, Councillor M. Marshall welcomed AR to the meeting and commenced proceedings. Along with Members of the Board; the following considerations were raised:

- **Updates at the Local Resilience Forum Level** - During discussions in the Impact of Heatwaves Task Group sessions the establishment of Worcestershire Prepared (WP) had been discussed to review risks, however this was not mentioned in the presentation. Was the work still ongoing? – Members were informed that the scheme was still being established, with the Terms of Reference still to be agreed. A mascot was being designed to encourage the scheme as a whole for community resilience, not just specifically for the Impacts of Heatwaves. It was also explained that AR were not leading on the scheme and the intention was for the group to carry out co-ordinated engagement for Heatwaves Preparedness.
- Was the operation of groups and agencies independent of LGR or would this also be reviewed? – The Board were informed that the partnership was formed by forty partners and would have significant implications. The West Mercia Local Resilience Forum (LRF) had not discussed the implications of LGR specifically and were focusing mostly on the statutory responsibilities. However, LRF would be keeping pace with developments and would be considering the necessary service provisions. Members were also advised that LGR had been added as a specific risk to the LRF register.
- **Cool Hubs** - Why were Cool Hub provisions for designated facilities specifically chosen for Churches of England, could other places of worship be explored? – It was explained that the Diocese had been considered as there had been good engagement, however, part of Worcestershire Prepared was to engage with all areas.
- How would the provision of Cool Hub facilities work for residents if availability was only for available during routine opening times? It was felt by Members that reliability of everyday Cool Hub venues was a necessity. – The Board were informed that opening times of venues were reliant and dependant on the severity of the civil emergency.
- A specific list of the facilities participating in the Cool Hub provision were requested for Members' consideration to also include venues which had air conditioning units present and those which did not. – It was agreed that this would be provided.
- Members requested Cool Hub provisions for the wider District should be explored to ensure adequate accessibility to all residents. - Members were informed that sourcing other venues was ongoing, including contacts with local parishes as a possible option. Engagement would be encouraged with WP, including the relevant partners and with voluntary sectors and agencies. Members were also advised that the provision for transporting vulnerable individuals to Cool Hub locations was also being considered.
- How would the provision of Cool Hubs be communicated to the public? – Engagement with the public and the use of facilities

would be dependent on the scale of the overall adverse level response. If there was an impending severe Heatwave Impact, the LGR would provide activate communications.

- Had equipment been procured for extra Cool Hub provision? – The Board were advised that the intension was only to provide facilities that were available within budget, however, if air conditioning units could be procured, other venues would be sourced. Members were advised that libraries did include air conditioning units and churches did not, however the thickness of the buildings' construction deemed them as an effective Cool Hub provision.
- It was suggested by a Member that sport centres and gym facilities could be explored as an option as the venues were equipped with air conditioning. – In response Members were advised that up front costings were difficult to request, as opposed to rest centres. In response Members expressed the view that the suggested venues should be explored in further detail as a necessity for the local area. In response Members were advised that if there was an adverse weather risk, that the venues were more likely to support the scheme, however, there had been challenges in the past, with some similar venues refusing to assist.
- Was there information available to manage reducing risk during heatwaves, for example, lighting fire for BBQs and if there was information available to encourage sensible behaviour for dog owners during the summer months. – Members were advised that fires were part of the national monitoring. The Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service would also adapt their messaging of risk, depending on intelligence. The scheme was also reliant on partnerships to push out messages. The suggestion of sensible behaviour for dog owners would be fed back for the Worcestershire Prepared comms programme.
- **Business Continuity Plans** - Could the Board be provided with progress on the Business Continuity Plans. - AR were in the process of meeting with all Assistant Directors and their teams to discuss business continuity plans. Members were also advised that keeping pace with the learning of cyber-attacks was an integral part of the plans.
- **Priority Services Register** - Was there progress to ensure the most vulnerable in the District were being included on the Priority Services Register and if figures could be provided? – The Board were advised that AR were not routinely provided with specific figures from utility services advising who had been put onto the register, however, AR were keen to promote the service and would review the suggestion further.
- Could WP consider managing their own Priority Services Register rather than relying on utility companies? – Members were informed that civil contingency plans could be reviewed if co-ordinated effectively, as an additional responsibility to be included in the BDC Adverse Weather Plan.

- Could the promotion and provision of the Priority Services Register (along with the relevant contact details) be included with the Council Tax bill distribution as a consideration? – It was agreed that this would be reviewed further and added to the list of requirements for the BDC Adverse Weather Plan.
- **Plans** - Could the Board be updated with progress of the BDC adverse weather plan. – The Board were informed that the plan was due for sign off and should be available by April, however, there was a need to review further Cool Hub provisions. Members were also advised that the LRF Adverse Weather Plan would be ready by next year.
- Did WP provide support for all weather conditions and not just extreme weather? – The Board were advised that WP were set up to advise on all weather conditions. There were also robust practices and training in place to assist Officers and Members for emergency planning.
- How would Members be informed of a severe weather warning, to ensure preparedness for residents. – Members were informed that included in the Council's Adverse Weather Plan would be actions required to notify residents that the local area were moving to an adverse weather warning. In response, Members expressed concerns that there seemed to be insufficient time to warn residents and requested a more robust approach. In response it was explained that there were emergency operational steps outlined in the BDC Business Continuity Plan and that any warnings were dependant on the Meteorological Office triggering a response.
- **Training** - Training was requested for Members to ensure that robust provisions were in place to provide the necessary advice to residents in preparedness for a Heatwave.
- **Warning and Informing** - If a comprehensive list of campaigns could be circulated who warn and inform residents of adverse weather conditions. – It was agreed that clearer guidance could be collated and provided in a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet, ahead of the BDC Adverse Weather Plan completion. Members were also advised that an integral part of WP responsibilities was to co-ordinate residents to the relevant available necessary documentation.
- Did NHS Surgeries provide sufficient information to residents to promote extreme weather preparedness advice? – The Board were informed that NHS Surgeries had their own formal protocols for extreme weather condition provisions, with clear robust guidance provided and were also part of WP.

RESOLVED that the Update on Heatwaves Preparedness be noted.

106/23

LOCAL HERITAGE ACTION LIST (QUARTERLY UPDATE)

The Principal Conservation Officer presented the Local Heritage Action List Quarterly Update for Member's consideration.

The Board were informed of progress on preparing the lists and are still inviting nominations for all areas.

Work on drafting the lists for Lickey and Blackwell, Bromsgrove, Wythall and Bournheath continued but had been reduced due to staff sickness and a rise of Development Management work in January and February. It was hoped that the delay would allow the Bromsgrove Society to contribute to the Bromsgrove list also.

Following consideration of the presentation, Members provided the following comments:

- A Member queried how the selection process for listings was co-ordinated and requested if Lickey End and Norton could be a future consideration of review, advising that some listed buildings were situated in the area. – In response the Board were informed that parishes were generally considered instead of by ward area (apart from the Bromsgrove and Rubery areas) and the Conservation Team had decided that Parishes/areas were selected in alphabetical order for fairness. It was advised that the Conservation Team were happy to receive any nominations which would be banked, however, may not be reviewed until the parish/area in which they are located is being reviewed. However, a visit could be arranged to provide a local listing information evening to provide a talk on the allocation process.
- A Member requested progress on the drafting of lists for Lickey and Blackwell. – In response the Board were informed that lists were being actively worked on and there had been discussions with the Parish Council, albeit some time ago. They had also submitted nominations.
- A Member suggested if Aston Field could be considered. – Advice of how to locate the nomination forms on the BDC Website was provided to Members.
- When reviewing Bromsgrove, was it solely the Town Centre for consideration? – In response the group were advised that it was not solely the Town Centre and that a list of the wards included in the Bromsgrove area would be provided for Members' consideration.
- Were further delays envisaged due to the rise in the Development Management work? – In response Members were informed that the work for the local plan was unpredictable, however, it was hoped progress on the lists would improve with the impending return of a staff member who had been on sick leave.
- Would Rubery be a future consideration? – The Principal Conservation Officer advised that Rubery could be a consideration. It was highlighted that the Cardinal Newman's House had been flagged for consideration which was within the District's jurisdiction, at a recent talk given by the Principal Conservation Officer.

- A Member raised concerns regarding Bilberry Hill Tearooms based in the Cofton Parish, which had been gifted to Birmingham City Council but had seemed reluctant to assist with the building's restoration. The building had dilapidated and was in serious need of repair. It was requested if the building could be reviewed by the Conservation Team. – The Board were advised that if the building was in private ownership and not listed, it would be difficult to assist. However, the Conservation Team were aware that West Midlands Building Preservation Trust had shown interest in the building, and if they were prepared to take it on as a project, they would have access to various grant monies to repair it. It was agreed that contact details would be provided to Councillor A. Dale.

RESOLVED that the Local Heritage Action List (Quarterly Update) by noted.

107/23

WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATES

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 meetings held on 8th January and 20th February 2025.

Updates on the dental service, Care Quality Commission inspection of Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (Well Led Inspection), mitigating winter pressures and urgent and emergency care and overview from West Midlands Ambulance Service were discussed.

Following the presentation Members discussed several points which included:

- Members raised concerns of the current state of the NHS Dental Service being seemed to be regarded as a residual service. It was queried if the National Dental Recovery Plan was having a positive impact and if there were necessary steps in place to ensure the dental service was adequately provided? – It was advised that the recovery plan was incomplete and still in progress. As the Board minutes were in the public domain, requests for data were not generally provided and was therefore difficult to analyse progress without the necessary data available.
- Concerns of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) cuts were raised by the Board and it was queried if the cuts would have an adverse effect on the Dental Service. – In response Members were advised that funding had been discussed during previous Board meetings and cuts to middle management had been suggested, however the considerations had not been welcomed. Specific questions would be progressed at a future HOSC meetings to provide further data.

- Members raised concerns and requested further details regarding issues with a closed culture and racism in some areas of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust with risk management process in need of review. – Members were advised that the issue was raised with the Board but were reluctant to comment and were advised that the Board would be reviewing the situation further.
- Identified deaths of patients whilst waiting for an ambulance was raised with concern by Members and it was requested if specific numbers were provided by the Board? – It was advised that there had been three cases and that the Ambulance Service were very open and honest with their response. It was acknowledged that there had been one preventable death and two cases where the service could have provided more adequate care.

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

108/23

FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - UPDATE

The Chairman of the Finance and Budget Working Group, Councillor P. McDonald updated the Board of the recent meeting which took place on Friday 21st March 2025.

A new software system was being utilised within the Council to analyse data, which would flag important information. Officers presenting the new software at the meeting were very enthusiastic. Members felt encouraged that the tool was a vast improvement on past software and would be a great asset for future data analysis.

Members were also encouraged by the recovery plan which was in a good position for the impending LGR.

The Board were also advised that the group had paid a fond farewell to Peter Carpenter, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer who was due to leave the Council. The group ensured that thanks were recorded for the work carried out by him and that the respect and support from the Council had been overwhelming.

RESOLVED that the Finance and Budget Working Group update be noted.

109/23

TASK GROUP - UPDATES

The Democratic Services Officer, who administered the Housing Task Group, provided an update on behalf of the Chairman of the Housing Task Group to the Board.

Members were informed that the group were on track and had covered each of the terms of reference items for investigation in various meetings with Officers. The next scheduled meeting would be held in person on 3rd April 2025 to draft the report and recommendations.

RESOLVED that the Housing Task Group update be noted.

110/23

CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was considered by the Board.

It was requested and the Board agreed that the Contaminated Land Strategy which was to be considered at Cabinet on 18th June 2025 should be scrutinised by the Board and be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for its meeting to be held on 17th June 2025.

LGR was raised by Members with the following points for consideration:

- Redundancies
- TUPE
- Vacancies
- Workforce

Members expressed the view that the Board should be considered to assist Cabinet with LGR and that the impending report should be scrutinised by the Board. – In response the Executive Director informed the Board that most staff would be TUPED over. The Minister had put out a statement that all Local Authorities who were required to, had submitted their interim plan. £7.6 m funding would be made available to twenty-one areas involved in LGR. Once a Unitary or North/South divide had been established with senior roles considered to be at most risk.

The Executive Director felt that the Board did have a role to play to review how services would be run with the impact of vacancies and redundancies. The Chief Executive would also be reviewing how to report to Cabinet and to the Overview and Scrutiny Board on a regular basis.

A report would be commissioned with other Local Authorities in the Worcestershire area to review LGR in more detail, with a transparent and balanced view considered integral as part of the review. Joint Chief Executives were meeting to discuss next steps and would look to commission a report.

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

111/23

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMMES

The Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme was considered by Members with the following points discussed:

- The Chairman raised and it was agreed by the Board that the Local Heritage Action List Quarterly Update would be moved from the June to the July meeting to free up some space on the work programme.
- A Member requested an update of progress for the Refuge Fleece Replacement. It was agreed this would be provided to the Board.
- It was raised by a Member and agreed by the Board that the Bromsgrove District Plan item should be removed from the June meeting and an extraordinary meeting be set up to scrutinise in further detail. Members did also discuss the need to ensure the meeting scheduled should be considered in line with the Strategic Planning Steering Group meetings also being held for Members.

- It was considered by a Member and agreed by the Board that shops closing on Bromsgrove High Street should be scrutinised as an item by the Board. – In response the Chairman advised that a seminar had been set up with a Representative from the Bromsgrove Traders who had provided a talk to Members. After consideration of the seminar, Members had provided suggestions. The Chairman suggested that a report should be provided to the Board to update Members on progress of the suggestions made.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

112/23

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTION SHEET

The Overview and Scrutiny Action Sheet was considered by Members.

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

113/23

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

There was no urgent business for consideration.

114/23

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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115/23

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 11TH AND 17TH FEBRUARY 2025

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 11th and 17th February 2025 were considered.

A Member highlighted that there was a typographical error on page 43 which read as follows:

*“If ANPR could be considered to pay on **exist** to encourage residents to stay in local areas for a longer period as opposed to the inconvenience of paying on entry”.*

It was noted that it should read as follows:

*“If ANPR could be considered to pay on **exit** to encourage residents to stay in local areas for a longer period as opposed to the inconvenience of paying on entry”.*

A further typographical error was highlighted on page 44 which read as follows:

*“If the consultants Waterman had engaged with **Warwickshire** County Council (WCC), as this was critical”?*

It was noted that it should read as follows:

*“If the consultants Waterman had engaged with **Worcestershire** County Council (WCC), as this was critical”?*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 11th and 17th February 2025 be agreed as a true and correct record.

(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)).

The meeting closed at 8.00 p.m.

Chairman