

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

14TH MAY 2025, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors S. Ammar (Chairman), B. Kumar (Vice-Chairman), A. Bailes, R. Bailes, S. J. Baxter, S. R. Colella, A. M. Dale, J. Elledge, S. M. Evans, D. J. A. Forsythe, E. M. S. Gray, C.A. Hotham, R. J. Hunter, M. Marshall, K.J. May, P. M. McDonald, B. McEldowney, S. T. Nock, D. J. Nicholl, S. R. Peters, J. Robinson, S. A. Robinson, H. D. N. Rone-Clarke, J. D. Stanley, K. Taylor, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

Officers: Mr J. Leach, Mr B. Watson, Mrs. C. Felton,
Ms. N Cummings and Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill

1\25

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN 2025/26

Councillor S. Ammar opened the meeting as the retiring Chairman of the Council from 2024/25.

A nomination was received from Councillor R. Hunter for Councillor S. Evans to be appointed Chairman of Bromsgrove District Council for the 2025/26 municipal year. Members were advised that Councillor Evans had already demonstrated during his time as a Councillor that he would work hard and had the skills required to fulfil the role effectively.

The nomination was seconded by Councillor S. Robinson.

RESOLVED that Councillor S. Evans be elected as Chairman of the Council for the ensuing municipal year.

Councillor Evans signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, thanked Members of the Council and stated that it was an honour to be elected to the Office of Chairman for the 2025/26 municipal year.

2\25

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN 2025/26

A nomination was received from Councillor K. May for Councillor B. Kumar to be appointed the Vice Chairman of Bromsgrove District Council for the 2025/26 municipal year. Council was informed that Councillor Kumar had worked hard during 2023/24 and 2024/25 as Vice Chairman of the Council and had provided excellent support to the Chairman during this time.

The nomination was seconded by Councillor S. Baxter.

RESOLVED that Councillor B. Kumar be elected Vice-Chairman of the Council for the ensuing municipal year.

Councillor Kumar signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and thanked Members of the Council for electing him to the office of Vice-Chairman.

3\25

VOTE OF THANKS TO RETIRING OFFICE HOLDERS

The Chairman proposed a vote of thanks to Councillor S. Ammar for her time serving as Chairman of Bromsgrove District Council. This was seconded by Councillor K. May.

As a mark of the Council's appreciation of Councillor Ammar serving as Chairman of Bromsgrove District Council in 2023/24 and 2024/25, the Chairman presented Councillor Ammar and her consort with several gifts including two past pendants.

RESOLVED that the thanks of the Council be tendered to Councillor S. Ammar for services rendered as Chairman of the Council in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

4\25

TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors J. Clarke, D. Hopkins, H. Jones and R. Lambert.

5\25

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

6\25

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 12TH MARCH 2025

The minutes from the extraordinary meeting of Council held on 12th March 2025 were submitted.

In respect of Minute Item No. 105/24 – Local Government Reorganisation – Interim Plan Proposals for Worcestershire – Bromsgrove – Councillor R. Bailes commented that in seconding a proposed amendment to the resolutions, she had referred to “implicit bias” rather than to “unconscious bias”, which had instead been recorded in the minutes. The request was made for this passage to therefore be amended.

Reference was also made to the general tenor of the discussions in respect of Local Government Reorganisation at that meeting. Members noted that this had captured the feelings of loss that were being

experienced by some Councillors and Officers. However, Members commented that it should also be noted that there had been a feeling that Local Government Reorganisation could lead to improvements to local government in the future.

In concluding discussions in respect of this item, a Member commented that the minutes provided an excellent record of the extraordinary Council meeting that had taken place on 12th March 2025. The Democratic Services team were subsequently thanked for their hard work on drafting and publishing minutes from Council and Committee meetings on an ongoing basis.

RESOLVED that subject to the amendments detailed in the preamble above, the minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Council held on 12th March 2025 be approved as a true and correct record.

7\25

TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN AND/OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Chairman thanked Members for appointing him as Chairman of Bromsgrove District Council in the 2025/26 municipal year, which he commented would be an honour and a privilege. The Chairman pledged to work with all Members equally and fairly during his term of office. Members were informed that the Chairman had grown up in the District and attended local schools during his childhood and he was proud of these roots. Council was informed that the Chairman would be announcing his consort and the charity(ies) that he would be supporting in due course.

During consideration of this item, on behalf of the Council, the Chairman paid tribute to Ms Betty Webb MBE who had sadly passed away since the previous meeting of Council at the age of 101. Council was informed that Ms Webb, from Wythall, was among the last surviving Bletchley code breakers. She had spent her youth during the Second World War deciphering enemy messages and later went on to work at the Pentagon, and subsequently at a school in Shropshire.

On behalf of the Council, the Chairman offered congratulations to Councillor R. Hunter and his wife on the birth of their daughter, Isla, since the previous meeting of Council.

The Chairman also led Members in congratulating Councillor H. Rone-Clarke and his partner on their forthcoming wedding, which was due to take place in June 2025.

The Head of Paid Service highlighted that a Member Briefing was due to take place on 21st May 2025 and would focus on the subject of Local Government Reorganisation. All Members were invited to attend this briefing.

8\25

TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

The Leader advised that Councillor S. Colella had stood down from the Cabinet and she thanked Councillor Colella for his hard work during his time serving as a Cabinet Member.

Council was advised that the Leader was in the process of reviewing the Cabinet. However, she confirmed that Councillor S. Baxter was being appointed to the position of Cabinet Member for Finance. The Leader had also amended her own portfolio so that she would become the Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling Services. In both cases, the changes to the Cabinet roles would apply with immediate effect.

9\25

TO RECEIVE COMMENTS, QUESTIONS OR PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no comments, questions or petitions from the public for consideration on this occasion.

10\25

URGENT DECISIONS

The Chairman advised that there had been one urgent decision taken since the previous Council meeting, on the subject of the Council's vehicle fleet.

11\25

CONSTITUTION REVIEW

The Leader presented the Constitution Review report for Members' consideration and in doing so highlighted that the majority of points underpinning the recommendations detailed in report had been considered at a recent meeting of the Constitution Review Working Group (CRWG). However, the Leader had subsequently had discussions with a number of group leaders and they had agreed that the fourth recommendation detailed in the report, relating to a proposed trial amendment to requirements for Questions and Motions on Notice detailed in the Council Procedure Rules, should be referred back to the CRWG for further debate. Therefore, the Leader advised that she was proposing only the first three resolutions as detailed in the report.

There was a constitutional requirement for the Council to review the Scheme of Delegations on an annual basis. Members were informed that the Constitution Review report provided an opportunity to address this, although Members were asked to note that no changes were being proposed to the delegations.

During consideration of this item, Members noted that the report contained a proposal to amend the rules on public speaking to clarify that this should not be used by representatives of political parties as an opportunity to address Council. Questions were raised about whether this should apply to political parties that were not currently represented

on the Council. The Leader clarified that, following discussions with other group leaders, it had been determined that public speaking at Council should not be used as an opportunity for any political party to address the Council. Bromsgrove District Councillors had all been elected by local residents as their representatives and Members' participation at Council and Committee meetings was the conduit through which the positions of political parties could be highlighted.

The first three recommendations in the report were proposed by Councillor K. May and seconded by Councillor S. Baxter.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The current version of the Officer Scheme of Delegations be agreed.
- 2) The Council's constitution be updated to restrict the Chairman of the Council from sitting on the Licensing Committee.
- 3) Paragraph 8.5 of the Council Procedure Rules be amended to include the following additional category in terms of people not regarded as members of the public for the purposes of registering to speak at Council meetings: "Political parties or persons asking questions on behalf of a political party. For the purposes of this section a political party is an organisation that has been registered as such by the Electoral Commission."

12\25

APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES 2025/26 (INCLUDING POLITICAL BALANCE)

The Leader presented the Appointments to Committees 2025/26 report for Members' consideration.

Members were informed that the figures provided in the report reflected the political balance of the Council and group leaders would be invited to submit nominations on behalf of their political groups to the various Committees in line with these figures. Any changes that might arise later in the year to the political balance would need to be reported at subsequent Council meetings.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor K. May and seconded by Councillor S. Baxter.

RESOLVED that

- 1) for the ensuring Municipal Year, the Committees set out in the table in Appendix 1 to the report be appointed and that the representation of the different political groups on the Council on those Committees be as set out in that table until the next Annual Meeting of the Council, or until the next review of political

representation under Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, whichever is the earlier.

- 2) Members be appointed to the Committees and as substitute members in accordance with nominations to be made by Group Leaders.
- 3) the terms of reference for the Boards and Committees be confirmed.

13\25

OUTSIDE BODY APPOINTMENTS

The Leader presented a report detailing proposed appointments from the Council to Outside Bodies for 2025/26.

Members were advised that prior to the Council meeting, the Leader had discussed the available spaces with all group leaders and they had agreed a list of nominations which was tabled for Council's consideration (Appendix 1). There would be a further report to Cabinet in June 2025 which would detail proposed nominations of Cabinet Members to outside bodies, where appointments needed to be made in an ex officio capacity, involving the requirement for the relevant Cabinet Member to be appointed.

In considering the list of outside bodies, Members were asked to note that one new organisation had been added, the WMTemps Partnership Board and the Council had been asked to confirm a nomination as soon as possible. It was proposed that the Leader should be appointed to this organisation as the relevant lead Cabinet Member.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor K. May and seconded by Councillor S. Baxter.

RESOLVED that the nominations to various outside bodies, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the minutes, be approved.

14\25

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE LICENSING COMMITTEE - PRIMATE KEEPER LICENSING

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee in 2024/25, Councillor J. Elledge, presented a recommendation arising from the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 24th March 2025 relating to Primate Keeper Licensing.

Council was advised that the licensing regime for Primate Keeper Licences was due to come into effect in two phases. In the first phase, applications for a Primate Licence could be made and this would be subject to paying a fee. Anybody found to be keeping a primate without a licence from 6th April 2026 would be committing an offence. The proposed fees for Primate Keeper Licences were based on advice received from the Government.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor J. Elledge and seconded by Councillor C. Hotham.

RESOLVED that the fees applicable to Primate Keeper Licences be set, as follows:

Application for the grant of a licence	£366.00
Application for renewal of a licence	£300.00
Application for variation of a licence	£267.00
Inspections fees	£182.00

15\25

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CABINET

Quarter 3 Finance and Performance Monitoring Report 2024/25

The Cabinet Member for Finance presented the Finance and Performance Monitoring report for the third quarter of the 2024/25 financial year.

Council was informed that in March 2025, Cabinet had agreed to submit a bid to Birmingham City Council for Bromsgrove District Council's share of funding arising from the authority's previous membership of the former Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP). Birmingham City Council held this funding on behalf of all former members of the GBSLEP and there was a requirement to submit business cases in order to access the funding. The budget needed to be amended to reflect the incorporation of this funding moving forward.

Members were asked to note that the balance sheet monitoring information that the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee had requested had been included within the appendices to the report.

Following the presentation of the report, questions were raised about the reasons why Bromsgrove District Council had to submit business cases to access the authority's own funds and the extent to which there was a risk that this funding would not be made available. Clarification was provided that former members of the GBSLEP, including Bromsgrove District Council, had pooled their business rates. This pooled funding had remained, even though the GBSLEP had ceased to exist and each former member of the GBSLEP was eligible to receive a portion of the remaining funds; Bromsgrove District Council was due to receive £2.5 million from this fund. Members were asked to note that the funding could only be used for certain purposes relating to regeneration and transformation. There were other former members of the GBSLEP that were also applying for their share of the funding and Birmingham City Council could not refuse to provide this funding.

The proposed allocation of the £2.5 million GBSLEP funding to the Levelling Up project at the former Market Hall site was discussed by Members and questions were raised about whether this would result in the availability of other Council funds to use on alternative projects.

Clarification was provided that, by the date of the meeting, there was a projected overspend of £1.5 million on the former Market Hall site and it was therefore anticipated that the GBSLEP funding could help to address some of these financial pressures. Members were also reminded that from the start of the project there had always been a requirement for Bromsgrove District Council to contribute 10 per cent of the funding and the GBSLEP funds would therefore help the authority to address this cost.

Reference was made to the current position of the £2.4 million GBSLEP funding that the Council was due to receive and Members commented that this fund would be accruing interest. The suggestion was made that this interest should be returned to Bromsgrove District Council as part of the process of accessing those funds.

The content of the report was discussed and concerns were raised about references in the report to financial costs arising from using agency staff. In particular, Members commented that the report referred to agency staff costs for the planning department at a time when it was also being reported that there was a shortage of applications. The Cabinet Member for Finance advised that further information would be requested from Officers in response to this query after the meeting.

Consideration was given to the savings that had been recorded for Legal Democratic and Procurement Services, including in respect of salary savings and elections and questions were raised about the reasons for these savings. The Leader explained that the figures recorded in this section of the report included the impact of the recruitment process for the positions of Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive respectively, which had been deferred from a previous planned timetable.

Budget forecasting by different departments was also discussed during the meeting. Concerns were raised that for many departments, the projected budget by the end of the financial year differed from the designated budget, with variances of up to 30 per cent in places. In response, it was acknowledged that there were variances in the budgets, although Members were asked to note that there were complex circumstances impacting on the budget. The Leader explained that she would aim to work with the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive on action that could be taken to improve budget management at the authority moving forward.

The timing of the Finance and Performance Monitoring report for the third quarter of the 2024/25 financial year was discussed. Members noted that the figures included in this report were projections and did not necessarily represent the final position by the end of the financial year. However, Members also commented that the report was often provided a few months after that quarter of the financial year had taken place and this could create challenges in terms of Members accessing and assessing current data.

In concluding discussions in respect of this item, Members noted that the Finance and Budget Working Group had an important role at the Council in terms of scrutinising the authority's budget and financial management. The suggestion was made that the group could identify and review a range of issues relating to the budget and the group's input was welcomed by the Cabinet.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor S. Baxter and seconded by Councillor K. May.

RESOLVED that

- 1) That the Balance Sheet Monitoring Position for Quarter 3 be noted – which was the Treasury Monitoring Report and required to be reported to Council; and
- 2) In the event that the bid was successful, the budget be amended to reflect that the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) funding would be applied to the Market Hall development.

16\25

TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON 19TH FEBRUARY 2025 AND 26TH MARCH 2025

The minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 19th February and 12th March 2025 were noted.

17\25

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

There were no Questions on Notice for consideration on this occasion.

18\25

MOTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chairman advised that there had been one Motion on Notice submitted for consideration at the Annual Council meeting. However, in order to ensure that due consideration was given to all options for spend in advance of Local Government Reorganisation, group leaders had agreed to meet to consider this comprehensively before the following ordinary meeting of the Council. For this reason, the Motion on Notice had been withdrawn and was not subject to debate at the Annual Council meeting.

19\25

TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE HEAD OF LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROCUREMENT 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 on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 6.52 p.m.

Chairman