

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

28TH OCTOBER 2025, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), S. T. Nock (Vice-Chairman), S. Ammar, A. M. Dale, C.A. Hotham, B. Kumar, S. A. Robinson, J. D. Stanley and H. D. N. Warren-Clarke

Observers: K. May – Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling and Councillor K. Taylor, Cabinet Member for Planning, Licensing and WRS

Officers: Mr. G. Revans, Mrs. R. Bamford, R Egan, Ms J. Willis, McElliott and Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill and Mrs S. Woodfield

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor A. Bailes, with confirmation provided that Councillor C.A. Hotham was attending as his named substitute.

Apology for absence was also received on behalf of Councillor R. Bailes as well as Councillor S.R. Colella (who was due to attend as her named substitute).

Members were advised that the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor S. Baxter, had also submitted an apology for the meeting.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

There were no declarations of interest nor of whipping arrangements.

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CITIZENS ADVICE (USES OF GRANT FUNDING)

The Chief Executive of Citizens Advice Bromsgrove and Redditch (CABR) delivered a presentation to the Board.

Members were informed that the charity received strong support from the Council and he expressed gratitude for the opportunity to present to Members on how the grant funding was being used.

The following key points were presented to the Board:

- The four key support areas provided by CABR were Core Services, Household Support Fund Distribution, Affordability Assessments and Outreach Development Projects.
- The Funding contribution from Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) was £123,400 with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) adding £23,606 per year.
- BDC was the highest funding contributor in Worcestershire to the CABR.
- The national average for funding the CABR was £1.34 per head in 2023/2024.
- CABR provided advice, not just information, which was regulated by the Advice Quality Standard (AQS), Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and Money and Pensions Service (MaPS).
- The charity was supported by 50–60 volunteers. The call answer rate had improved from 24% in 2020 to 38% in 2025.
- In total, 4,710 households in Bromsgrove District received full advice and 773 households received light-touch advice.
- In addition, £388,601 income had been gained and £676,674 debts had been managed for residents.
- The Household Support Fund (HSF) costed £7,000 per annum to deliver with £50,000 of funds distributed.
- £2,745 had been provided a year to carry out affordability assessments for Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) clients.
- In addition, £62,000 had been provided by the Council for an Outreach project over 18 months. To date, regular sessions were held in Charford, Catshill, Rubery, Wythall, Alvechurch, Sidemoor and Clent.
- There were future challenges with increased demand expected, funding sustainability and the Local Government Review (LGR) implications to consider.
- There were potential outsourcing opportunities for the follow-on funding from the HSF Scheme, including discretionary housing payments and tenancy support.

After consideration of the presentation the following discussions were carried out by the Board:

- Various Parish Council contributions were discussed, with Members noting one contribution of £5,000 was provided in the previous financial year.
- There would be a review of the charity's website, however, it was agreed that the Outreach calendar updates relating to the availability of the CABR would be shared with Members as requested.
- There were numerous collaborations with other partners for the Outreach project, including work with food banks and community hubs.
- There were a wide range of discussions with various client age groups at Outreach events with advice offered on issues with pensions and wills to debts and housing.

RESOLVED that the Citizens Advice report be noted.

55/25

LOCAL HERITAGE ACTION LIST (QUARTERLY UPDATE)

The Assistant Director of Planning, Leisure and Culture Services presented the Local Heritage Action List update to Members.

The following key points were discussed.

- Progress on the Local Heritage List had been delayed but there were mitigation steps in place at the application stage, to identify any buildings of local significance.
- The first tranche of parishes had been adopted, with the website updated and owners had also been notified accordingly.
- The draft list for Wythall had been completed and work was ongoing for the Lickey and Blackwell areas.
- There were staffing challenges as two Conservation Officers had resigned. The Principal Conservation Officer remained to cover the work, but they worked part-time. A Consultant had been appointed to assist with the Local Heritage Lists and recruitment was also underway to fill the vacant posts.

After the Local Heritage List update had been provided, Members discussed the following points:

- Backlog concerns were raised and it was explained that priority remained at the planning application stage. However, it was

reiterated that buildings of local significance were mitigated by the application stage checks.

- Details of the cost of consultancy work to assist with the Local Heritage List was requested, which was agreed would be circulated to Members by relevant Officers.
- Members queried the recruitment outlook for the vacant posts. Officers responded that they were hopeful the positions would be filled, citing the flexibility in working hours as a key factor.

RESOLVED that the Local Heritage Action List update report be noted.

56/25

LEVELLING UP FUND PROGRAMME (QUARTERLY UPDATE)

The Regeneration Project Delivery Manager presented an update on the Levelling Up Fund Programme in Bromsgrove to the Board.

Members were informed that there was a typographical error within the report at point 3.8 of the table under 'Risk and fixed price allowance' and that the figure stated should have read £58,151.08 and not £55,151.08 as recorded.

The following key points were discussed with the Board:

Windsor Street

- Brownfield Solutions had completed Phase One of remediation works. The Environment Agency (EA) technical feedback was expected to be completed in October 2025.
- Once feedback from the EA was received, the Council was likely to undertake Phase Two remediation works, with a budget allowance in place to cover the costs. Completion was expected by May 2026.
- Cabinet was due to consider housing delivery options in November 2025.

Nailers Yard

- Works to the culvert had increased to £1.6m, with a provisional sum allowance of approximately £225,000 in the Kier contract. This had increased the overall Levelling Up Programme costs by £165,000. Therefore, an urgent decision was taken in August 2025 to commit a further £500,000 to the Levelling Up Programme, which included an allowance of £335,000 for additional contingency.

- The completion date was originally expected to be January 2026; however, this had been extended to 4th May 2026.
- There had already been strong commercial interest in the office space and food and beverage units in the commercial building with service charge arrangements in progress.
- The Full Business Case (FBC) to secure the Council's funding from the former Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) was in progress.
- The overall funding secured of £16.103 million had increased by £1.093 million to a total of £17.194 million including the additional £500,000 agreed by BDC which increased the total to £17.694 million. The final cost would be an estimated £19.8 million. The GBSLEP bid for £2.425 million was pending. Therefore, the total potential funding pot was £20.118 million.
- There were risks reported with a potential impact on project budget and programme at the Nailers Yard site for culvert works, incoming electrics and the commercial building layout. Potential risks were also highlighted at the Windsor Street site for EA sign off of remediation works and BDC were due to agree future delivery options for the site prior to any works.

Following the levelling up update, Members discussed a number of points:

- Assurance on the completion date was discussed, due to the delays arising from culvert works. It was explained that any delays caused by the client or beyond anyone's control, such as poor weather, would be met by the Council whereas any delay based on contractor performance would be applied to the contractor Kier Construction Limited.
- Service charge explanations and concerns were discussed with the Board. Officers reassured Members that a resolution to secure the leases with incoming tenants would be a priority.
- Clarification on a cost breakdown was discussed for Mechanical and Electrical (M&E) works, prolongation, insurance and overheads. Officers agreed that a more detailed breakdown would be provided to Members.

- Return on investment was also discussed with the Board and Officers provided details of the six-year payback claim.
- Clarification on the specifics of spend for the GBSLEP funding were also discussed with details provided to the Board.
- Further information about housing density at the Windsor Street site was discussed and Members were informed that a meeting was scheduled with the Principal Conservation Officer to review the options available.
- Members were provided with an explanation of the culvert works as requested. It was noted that the works were deemed necessary to mitigate flood risks and that omitting them would have significantly increased the risks.
- Revenue expectations were discussed, with an estimated annual income of £330,000 to the Council. It was explained that service charges covered building upkeep, while voids liability remained with the Council.
- Members were also given clarification on what service charges entailed and it was explained that it applied to the property management. The Board was informed that the appointment of a property management agent had been delayed due to the procurement process, but progress was being made.
- Homes England funding for Windsor Street was also discussed with Members querying if any restrictions applied. It was explained that additional affordable housing provision could attract funding opportunities.

RESOLVED that the update on the progress of the Levelling Up Fund projects be noted.

(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 that included information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). However, there is nothing exempt in this record of the meeting).

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TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR 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.

The meeting closed at 7.20 p.m.

Chairman