

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 16TH JULY 2025, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Observers:

Officers: Mr J. Leach, Mr. G. Revans, Mrs. C. Felton, D Goodall, Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill and Mrs J. Gresham

25\25

TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors S. Ammar, A. Bailes, S. Colella, J. Elledge and S. Robinson.

26\25

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

27\25

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 14TH MAY AND 19TH JUNE 2025

The minutes of the Council meetings held on 14th May and 19th June 2025 were submitted.

During consideration of this item, Councillor P. McDonald advised that there had been some changes to his group's membership of two committees previously reported at the meeting held on 19th June 2025. Councillor E. Gray was now a Member of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee, replacing Councillor H. Warren-Clarke and Councillor H. Warren-Clarke was now a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Board, replacing Councillor E. Gray.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of Council held on 14th May and 19th June 2025 be approved as true and correct records.

28\25

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

Chairman

The Chairman announced his Chairman's Charity for the ensuing municipal year was The Basement Project. The Basement Project was a local, independent charity that played a vital role in supporting some of the most vulnerable young people within the community.

On 19th September 2025 a charity fundraising event was to be held to raise funds for The Basement Project. All Members were invited to attend this event.

Head of Paid Service

There were no announcements from the Head of Paid Service.

29\25

TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

The Leader announced that from the next ordinary meeting of the Council, due to be held in October 2025, Portfolio Holder reports would be reintroduced for the consideration of Council.

During consideration of this item, Councillor K. May was thanked for her support in agreeing to postpone consideration of the Constitution Review – Recommendations report, which had been due to be considered at the meeting.

30\25

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

The Chairman informed Council that no questions, comments or petitions had been received from members of the public on this occasion.

31\25

URGENT DECISIONS

Members were advised that no Urgent Decisions had been taken since the previous meeting of Council.

32\25

AUDIT, STANDARDS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

Members were informed that the previous Chairman of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee, Councillor H. Warren-Clarke would present the Audit, Standards and Governance Annual Report 2024/25 for Council's consideration.

In doing so, it was noted that the Statement of Accounts for the financial years 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 had been made available for public consultation and had received disclaimer opinions from the external auditors as per the backstop legislation.

The draft Statement of Accounts had also been produced for the financial year 2023/24 and was now out for public consultation. This was also in line with the backstop requirements. There had been no audit opinion received in respect of these accounts at the time of the meeting, due to the recent onboarding of new external auditors.

Councillor H. Warren-Clarke explained it had been a monumental year for the Council in terms of production of the Statement of Accounts. Thanks were extended to the Democratic Services team, the previous Section 151 Officer and the Assistant Director for Finance and Customer Services. Councillor R. Bailes was also thanked for her role as Risk Champion for the Committee during the 2024/25 municipal year.

Following the presentation of the report, Councillor H. Warren-Clarke was thanked for his work over the 2024/25 municipal year.

There was a question raised in respect of the onboarding of the new external auditors. The Assistant Director for Finance and Customer Services and Deputy Section 151 Officer provided further information in respect of the new external auditors, Ernst & Young. It was reported that the new auditors had been onboarded in June 2025 and that assurance and value for money work was currently underway on the 2023/24 draft accounts. Discussions had taken place on the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts which was due in February 2026, as per the backstop legislation. The external auditors had also attended the recent Audit, Standards and Governance Committee meeting on 14th July 2025.

33\25

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

Councillor P. McDonald presented the Overview and Scrutiny Board Annual Report 2024/25 in his role as Chairman of the Board.

It was reported that several task group investigations had taken place over the municipal year, and a number of reports had been pre-scrutinised prior to their consideration by Cabinet. This pre-scrutiny had resulted in a number of recommendations being made, most of which had been agreed by Cabinet.

One extra meeting had been convened during the municipal year due to the significant workload. Councillor P. McDonald took the opportunity to thank Officers for their hard work and commitment to the scrutiny process, sometimes at very long meetings.

The Leader thanked the Chairman and Members of the Board for the detailed scrutiny carried out throughout the year. The recommendations made by the Board were welcomed and it was noted that this had resulted in greater involvement from Members in the decision-making process.

34\25

CONSTITUTION REVIEW - RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chairman announced that prior to the meeting, at the agreement of Group Leaders, this item had been withdrawn from the agenda and would not be debated at this meeting.

35\25

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

Council considered the recommendations arising from the meeting of Cabinet held on 18th June 2025.

Contaminated Land Strategy

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Licensing and Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) presented the Contaminated Land Strategy report for Members' consideration. In doing so, it was noted that there was no contaminated land in Bromsgrove. However, it was important to understand what had been situated on land within the District previously to ascertain whether sites were suitable for development or not.

Following the presentation of the report, there was a detailed discussion regarding the proposed Contaminated Land Strategy. Several areas were raised by Members, including whether it was accurate to state that there was no contaminated land within the District. Members commented that recently there had been a significant amount of work

carried out at the Windsor Street site in order to remediate the contamination found at this location.

Members were informed that if there was no liable party for contaminated land, the responsibility for clearing the site would fall to Bromsgrove District Council and ultimately the taxpayer. This would result in a reactive approach being taken on any area identified as contaminated, which might not be the most appropriate way to deal with this type of land in the future. Clarification was provided that there would be environmental tests carried out prior to any building within a specific site in the District, to see if the land was contaminated and what the costs of remediation of such sites would be.

The report had been considered previously at the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting that took place on 17th June 2025. There was a suggestion that this report could be referred back to the Board in order to provide further clarity. Some Members explained that the pre-scrutiny of the report had been detailed during the meeting of the Board and did not feel that this would be necessary and that the Strategy had been devised using a prioritisation methodology. Members commented that it was likely there was contaminated land across the District, however, it was suggested that there was not the resource within the Council to clear these areas. The remediation of these sites would be picked up through the Planning process as and when any contamination was identified.

The recommendation was proposed by Councillor K. Taylor and seconded by Councillor K. May.

RESOLVED that

The Council adopt the revised Contaminated Land Strategy to be published on the Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) website.

Warm Homes Local Grants Funding and Resources

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Climate Change presented the Warm Homes Local Grants Funding and Resources for the consideration of Council.

It was noted that the funding awarded by Central Government for this project had not been a significant amount. The funding would cover the cost of works being carried out on approximately nineteen to twenty private homes at the average cost of fifteen thousand pounds. There

would be further funding available for social housing properties at a later date.

The Council would work alongside Act on Energy to allocate the funding to appropriate homeowners based on the specific criteria for the funding.

During consideration of the report, it was noted that fuel poverty continued to be an issue for residents across the District and although this was not a significant sum of money to carry out the proposed work, it was important for residents to be able to access this type of funding.

Members raised concerns in terms of risks identified within the report. It was noted that one of the risks was that the project would be undersubscribed. Members questioned what measures would be put in place to ensure that this was not the case? It was explained that it was unlikely that this would happen and no real problems were anticipated in this area. Another potential risk was oversubscription to the projects and that there needed to be a delicate balance when allocating the funding. It was explained that, by working with Act on Energy to identify homeowners who met the specific criteria for the funding, the risk would be mitigated. The matter of signposting was raised by Members and whether there was the opportunity for agencies such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau or Age UK to signpost homeowners to Act on Energy to access the funding. It was reported that Act on Energy worked alongside various other organisations that would provide information to those households that met the criteria, whilst continuing to be mindful of the limitations of the funding. It was also questioned whether Act on Energy had sufficient resources to facilitate the allocation of the funding.

Clarification was provided that there was the potential opportunity, as a result of the Local Government Reorganisation, that some Capital funding could be allocated to cover further works such as this in the future. It was suggested that residents who lived in park homes could be approached as potential recipients of this funding, as they had not been included in a previous round of similar funding.

Concerns had been raised regarding the scale of the proposed works and the lack of ambition in the associated timelines. It was explained that the phasing of the funding was prescriptive and there was no ability to change the way the funding was allocated within the project timeframe.

Members welcomed the news that the Council's targets for net zero were still being met. However, it was requested that the Council continue to lobby the Government in respect of these matters in the future.

Councillor B. McEldowney proposed the recommendation, and it was seconded by Councillor S. Baxter.

RESOLVED that Authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer to reflect in the Capital Programme the grant funding in 2025/26 and to include the 2026/27 and 2027/28 funding into the Medium-Term Financial Plan for the Warm Homes Local Grant (WHLG) (as shown below).

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
£31,423.08	£129,000	£124,700

Appointments to the Shareholders Committee

The Leader presented the Appointments to the Shareholders Committee for Spadesbourne Homes Limited, a sub-committee of the Cabinet. The proposed membership required for four Members of the Cabinet to sit on the Shareholders Committee, rather than the five Members who had been appointed in 2024/25. This excluded the Cabinet Member for Planning and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing and Strategic Housing. All Group Leaders would continue to be invited to attend meetings, and relevant training had been provided for Members of the committee. It was reported that a Shareholders Committee Annual Report would be presented to Council on a yearly basis in the future.

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

RESOLVED that the updated Terms of Reference for the Shareholders Committee be approved.

36\25

TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 18TH JUNE 2025

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 18th June 2025 were noted.

37\25

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chairman explained that five Questions on Notice had been submitted for this meeting.

Question submitted by Councillor J. Robinson

“It is vital we ensure residents across the Bromsgrove District continue to have access to activities that can help them stay healthy. Can the Cabinet Member confirm if the Cabinet would consider supporting the introduction of a park run in Bromsgrove?”

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing and Strategic Housing provided a response and in doing so informed Members that there was currently a Junior Park Run held in Sanders Park on Sundays. In addition to this, there was the opportunity for residents to take part in Couch to 5K programmes throughout the year and a Bumble Bimble event organised on a yearly basis.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing and Strategic Housing suggested that she would be happy to meet with Councillor J. Robinson along with the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Climate Change to discuss the potential for further opportunities in the future.

Question submitted by Councillor D. Nicholl

“Will the Cabinet consider supporting South Bromsgrove High School with a new surface for their 3G pitch that is used for both students and the wider community?”

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Climate Change provided a response and stated that, in line with the Council’s Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy, Officers would be working with third party providers to determine the very best use of public money in the context of dual use and other agreements in communities.

The value of outdoor pitch facilities was recognised, and South Bromsgrove High School were encouraged to meet with Officers so that any community use agreements might be explored. Councillor D. Nicholl asked a supplementary question, enquiring as to which Officer was best placed to be contacted regarding this matter. Members were informed that the Assistant Director for Planning and Leisure Services would be the most appropriate Officer to be contacted.

Question submitted by Councillor J. Clarke

“With plans to decommission Churchfields, Stourbridge Road and School Drive car parks alongside ambitious growth plans, are you confident the town will have enough car parking capacity at peak times?”

The Leader provided a response and explained that as detailed in the Bromsgrove Town Centre Strategic Framework, this matter would be considered by Cabinet on 23rd July 2025. Future car parking needs would be reviewed in line with the Council's growth plans to ensure that sufficient capacity could be maintained. In addition to this and, building on the Strategic Car Parking Review carried out in 2024, the Council was to review Town Centre parking policies to ensure they supported local economic needs and attracted visitors. In this way, the use of each car park was to be considered, which included that a positive user experience be included.

Question submitted by Councillor S. Robinson (as Councillor S. Robinson had submitted her apologies for this meeting, the question was asked by Councillor R. Hunter).

“How many bus shelters, owned by Bromsgrove District Council, have been replaced in each of the last three financial years?”

The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services provided the response to this question. In doing so, Members were informed that the Council owned sixty-one bus shelters. The number of bus shelters replaced in each of the last three financial years was as follows:

- In 2022-2023 – one bus shelter replaced
- In 2023-2024 – two bus shelters replaced
- In 2024-2025 – seven bus shelters replaced

In addition to these, it was reported there were plans to replace six bus shelters in the financial year 2025/26.

Councillor R. Hunter asked a supplementary question in respect of this matter.

“Eighteen thousand pounds was allocated by the Council for the replacement of bus shelters on an annual basis. How much of this budget had been spent?”.

The Cabinet Member for Environmental Services reported that the Revenue expenditure was as follows:

Financial Year	Annual Budget	Actual Spend	Variance
2022/23	£3,779	£1,375	-£2,404
2023/24	£3,805	£2,205	-£1,600
2024/25	£3,805	£6,115	+£2,310

It was further reported that the Capital expenditure was as follows:

Financial Year	Annual Budget	Actual Spend
2022/23	£0	£0
2023/24	£18,000	£0 (rolled onto 2024/25)
2024/25	£36,000	£19,655
2025/26	£18,000	tbc

Question submitted by Councillor S. Colella (as Councillor S. Colella had submitted his apologies for this meeting the question was asked by Councillor C. Hotham).

“At the meeting of 17th October 2022, the following question was asked and the following response provided in public:

This Council asks for reassurance that the transport assessment work, which has been lacking to date, will be completed to the satisfaction of BDC for the Issues and Options consultation, along with a stated time plan that can be adhered to?

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services responded by explaining that additional transport assessment work was being progressed with Worcestershire County Council (WCC). This work would support the preferred option of the District Plan Review. In due course, a new timetable for the plan production would be published which would fully take into account the time it would take to complete the additional transport assessment work.

The Question now is: What has happened to the Transport assessment and transport modelling in relation to the District Plan One Option Consultation launched on Monday 30th June 2025?”

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services provided a response to this question and stated that in accordance with the timeline, a partial transport assessment had been produced and published to support the Draft Development Strategy Consultation. The Bromsgrove Plan was not yet at preferred options stage, and plan making was an iterative process. The level of information currently

available was sufficient and appropriate in support of the choices that had been made at this draft stage. The outcome of the current consultation process would inform the next stage of transport assessment and infrastructure planning, which was why it was key that the public and key stakeholders responded to the consultation to highlight the specific detail of the transport issues the District faced. Bromsgrove District Council Officers continued to work with Worcestershire County Council to seek assurances and clarity on the approach for the more detailed assessment of transport impacts required for further iterations of the plan.

A supplementary question was asked by Councillor C. Hotham who queried how the public were able to comment on the Draft Development Strategy, currently out for public consultation, if transport data was not available and whether this lack of information negated the validity of the consultation?

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regulatory Services stated that this was not the case.

38\25

MOTIONS ON NOTICE

The Chairman advised Members that two Motions on Notice had been submitted for consideration at this meeting.

Council considered the following Motion on Notice that was submitted by Councillor D. Nicholl:

“The Office of the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) aimed to create sustainable communities. Given the proposal in our draft Development Strategy to build nine thousand extra homes by 2043 across BDC, Bromsgrove District, Council resolves to request that the Leader write to the Deputy Prime Minister to highlight how these figures contradict those which are compatible with a sustainable community and ask for the affordability multiplier under the National Planning Policy Framework be reviewed urgently.”

Prior to consideration of the Motion on Notice, Councillor D. Nicholl explained that he was proposing the original Motion included in the main agenda for this meeting in a slightly altered form of wording. The wording would now read as follows:

“The Office of the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) aimed to create sustainable communities. Given the proposal in our draft Development Strategy to build nine thousand extra homes by 2043 across Bromsgrove District, Council resolves to ask the **Group Leaders** to write to the Deputy Prime Minister to highlight how these figures contradict those which are compatible with a sustainable community and ask for the affordability multiplier under the National Planning Policy Framework be reviewed urgently.”

In proposing the Motion, Councillor D. Nicholl explained that the proposal to build nine thousand extra homes within the District was not in line with a sustainable community and would be catastrophic to the residents of Bromsgrove and destroy much of the District.

It was stated that the affordability multiplier used in order to ascertain the number of homes needed to be built by 2043 in the District was flawed. Therefore, it was requested that a letter be sent to the Deputy Prime Minister to request clarification on the affordability multiplier and that a review of the multiplier be undertaken urgently.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor R. Hunter.

Prior to the debate on this Motion, an amendment was suggested by Councillor K. Taylor. The proposal was that the wording be amended as follows:

“The Office of the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) aimed to create sustainable communities. Given the proposal in our draft Development Strategy to build nine thousand extra homes by 2043 across Bromsgrove District, Council resolves to ask **all Members** to write to the Deputy Prime Minister to highlight how these figures contradict those which are compatible with a sustainable community and ask for the affordability multiplier under the National Planning Policy Framework be reviewed urgently.”

The amendment was seconded by Councillor S. Webb.

Members commented that ensuring all Members sign a letter to Government might prove difficult to facilitate, particularly with the tight timeframes involved.

During a detailed and robust debate, the following areas were highlighted by Members:

- The matter of the affordability multiplier had already been discussed during consideration of the Local Plan consultation in June 2025. After robust debate at this meeting, the public consultation had been approved by Members, thus ensuring that decisions would not need to be made centrally by Government.
- The Council's responsibility was to ensure that residents had access to good quality housing within the District and the public consultation process was an essential part of Local Plan development to ensure residents' feedback was taken into account, prior to any final decisions being made. There were currently four thousand people on the housing list, highlighting a pressing need for increased provision of social housing within the District.
- Members commented that it was difficult for young people who had grown up in Bromsgrove to afford homes within the District and therefore housing developments on Green Belt land were required to ensure that housing was available to those who most needed homes. Some Members expressed the view that this was an unfair representation of the discussions at the Extraordinary Council meeting held in June 2025. The proposed small numbers of houses in certain areas would not affect these areas greatly and impact on residents would be minimal. However, in other areas there would be a greater impact on residents due to the larger numbers of proposed homes to be built.

At this point in the meeting, it was requested that a vote be taken on the amendment to the Motion received from Councillor K. Taylor. On being put to the vote the amendment to the Motion was lost.

In continuing the debate on the substantive Motion, the following areas were discussed in detail:

- Some Members expressed the view that the narrative around the Draft Development Strategy should be that residents should be encouraged to participate in the consultation process and reminded that no decisions had to date been made. It was the responsibility of Members to communicate this to residents in their Wards.
- It was accepted that homes needed to be built across Bromsgrove, but at the correct level for the District and the public consultation process would provide this detail. Collaborative

working was key to this consultation process, and this could be done through Members working with residents, local organisations and Parish Councils to provide constructive feedback through the consultation process.

- Some Members confirmed that they were encouraging residents to make a thoughtful submission, including detailed information about transport links, education and health provision, through the public consultation and not through petitions or any other means. However, there was some frustration expressed that there was only one option to be consulted on as part of the Draft Development Strategy.
- There was a discussion as to whether it was appropriate to debate this Motion whilst the public consultation was still underway. However, Officers advised that this Motion was deemed permissible. In terms of the content of the Motion, it was stated that the matter of the affordability multiplier had already been addressed in the Council's 'Response to the Proposed Reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework to Government', submitted following the Extraordinary Council meeting in September 2024. As part of the Council's response at Questions seventeen and nineteen in that consultation paper, it was clearly stated that the Council was opposed to increasing the affordability multiplier from zero point two five per cent to zero point six per cent.
- Members commented that when this response was submitted, the numbers of homes to be built per annum was seven hundred and three. However, following the receipt of the feedback from the Council, appealing the decision on the number, an increase in numbers had been applied by the Government to seven hundred and thirteen homes to be built per annum. Therefore, there were concerns raised that if this Motion was agreed and a letter written to the Deputy Prime Minister, it might result in a further increase rather than a decrease in numbers of homes to be built across the District.

In concluding the debate on this Motion, it was noted that the housing list data on the GOV.UK website currently showed that there were two thousand, three hundred and seventy-five names on the housing list and not four thousand as detailed earlier at the meeting. It was accepted that this figure was too high and that more homes were needed within the District. However, Members expressed the view that a requirement to build nine thousand additional homes was a disproportionate response versus need.

Some Members were disappointed that there had only been one option included in the Draft Development Strategy for public consultation and suggested that a number of options would have been preferable. There were also concerns raised that it was part of the political process to continue to lobby against issues that were not satisfactory for the residents and that this Motion had been designed to do that.

On being put to the vote the Motion was lost.

The Chairman announced that there was seven minutes remaining of the time allocated for consideration of Motions.

A proposal to extend the time limit for half an hour was received from Councillor J. Robinson and seconded by Councillor R. Hunter.

On being put to the vote, the request for an extension for the time to consider the second Motion was lost.

There was a query raised as to whether there would be the opportunity to debate the Motion at the Extraordinary Council meeting due to be held on September 2025. Officers advised that this would not be possible and therefore the Motion would be deferred to the next ordinary meeting of the Council in October 2025.

39\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 on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 8.00 p.m.

Chairman