

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE

FRIDAY 7TH NOVEMBER 2025, AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors S. Ammar (Chairman), C.A. Hotham (Vice-Chairman),
S. M. Evans, E. M. S. Gray, K.J. May, S. T. Nock and J. Robinson

Officers: Mrs. C. Felton, Mr D. Whitney and Ms M. Bassett

16/25 **ELECTION OF A CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2025/26 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

As this was the first meeting of the municipal year the Electoral Services Manger asked for nominations for Chairman. Councillor S. Ammar was proposed by Councillor J. Robinson and seconded by Councillor S. Evans.

There being no further nominations, it was

RESOLVED that Councillor S. Ammar be appointed Chairman for the 2025/26 Municipal year.

17/25 **ELECTION OF A VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2025/26 MUNICIPAL YEAR**

The Chairman requested nominations for the position of Vice Chairman for the 2025/26 municipal year. Councillor C. Hotham was nominated by Councillor J. Robinson and seconded by Councillor K. May.

RESOLVED that Councillor C. Hotham be appointed Vice Chairman of the Electoral Matters Committee for the 2025/26 Municipal year.

18/25 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES**

There were no apologies for absence, but it was noted that Councillor E. Gray would be arriving late.

19/25 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor S. Evans declared another disclosable interest in respect of Minute Item No. 5: Local Government Reorganisation - regarding Finstall Parish in respect of his role as County Councillor.

Councillors K. May and S. T. Nock declared other disclosable interests in respect of Minute Item No. 5: Local Government Reorganisation - in respect of their roles as Parish Councillors at Belbroughton Parish Council.

20/25

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE HELD ON 22ND NOVEMBER 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2024 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22nd November 2024 be approved as a correct record.

21/25

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN BROMSGROVE - REPORT AND PRESENTATION

The Senior Electoral Services Officer gave a presentation on implications for Local Governance in Bromsgrove due to Local Government Reorganisation. This began with touchstones on reviewing Local Governance. The presentation was based around three strands of Local Governance at its lowest level: Neighbourhood Area Committees, Parish and Town Councils and Charter Trustees.

Starting with Neighbourhood Area Committees, an explanation was given on what they were and how they worked. A couple of recent examples (Sheffield City Council and Wiltshire Council) of Area Committees were cited with some detail on how these were working in practice.

Members discussed the merits of Neighbourhood Area Committees and asked specifically about funding, powers and the make up of them. It was noted that the Committees were made up from relevant Members of the Local Authority, received funding to spend in their area, which was defined, like the scope, by the Authority.

(During the presentation at 5.25pm Councillor E. Gray joined the meeting.)

The Senior Electoral Services Officer progressed to Parish and Town Councils and how Community Governance Reviews (CGRs) would be

required to create new parishes in unparished areas. It was also explained that new parishes might affect existing parishes in trying to parish, for example, Bromsgrove Town.

There was a general discussion on CGRs where it was confirmed that this could happen at any time and a future unitary authority might wish to carry out a CGR.

A Member asked why this was being looked into at this point in time. It was explained that Local Governance needed to be considered to feed into the Local Government Reorganisation report for the extraordinary Council meeting scheduled to take place on 19th November 2025.

The final part of the presentation covered "Charter Trustees" which could be appointed in unparished areas. The trustees would enable the continuation of civic and ceremonial traditions of unparished areas within the current district including the town of Bromsgrove.

The charter trustees would be the elected members of the authority for that area and if in the future a town or parish council was created, any civic regalia would be transferred to that council.

The Senior Electoral Services Officer concluded the presentation and stated that officers would recommend option two in the recommendations to further explore appointing charter trustees for unparished areas.

The Chairman then opened the meeting up for general discussion.

The discussion started in relation to charter trustees and specifically what would be handed over, what areas would have them and how much they would cost.

It was explained that further investigation would be required but was noted that all the unparished areas would need to be considered and that charter trustees would have a small budget to cover office/administrative costs.

Committee members discussed charter trustees for Bromsgrove town and the potential creation of a town council for Bromsgrove. Some members were torn between the two. Officers reminded the meeting that a CGR would really need to consider areas that were already parished that could be considered part of Bromsgrove town.

It was further noted that if a full CGR of the Bromsgrove area was requested, this would have to start almost immediately to be completed before the new Unitary Council was vested.

There was a further discussion on the impact of asset transfer to parishes and how that would work in practice. It was confirmed that the principal council and the parish needed to be in agreement on transfer of assets.

Some members of the Committee were leaning towards a CGR for the Bromsgrove area but were concerned about the operational constraints of holding a CGR in the coming months. Officers confirmed that a CGR could be held at a future date (including at request via a petition or by the new Unitary Council).

After summing up, members decided to explore option two of the recommendations on the proviso that a report come back to the Committee. This was proposed by Councillor K. May and seconded by Councillor S. Nock.

Members were reminded that the Committee had already agreed a CGR for Finstall Parish and as the Electoral Review for Bromsgrove had been halted, the CGR should now go ahead as per recommendation one.

Recommendation two in the report covered the request to make a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to re-align the ward and parish boundaries due to a discrepancy which came about from a CGR in 2014/15. Although no electors were currently affected this would ensure alignment if future development occurred. Recommendations one and two were proposed by Councillor J. Robinson and seconded by Councillor C. Hotham.

All members were in agreement, and it was:

RESOLVED that

- 1) A Community Governance Review be undertaken for Finstall parish.
- 2) A submission be made for a Related Alteration for the Hagley East, Hagley West and Belbroughton and Romsley wards to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

and **RECOMMENDED** that

- 3) officers be instructed to explore in more detail the option of appointing "Charter Trustees" for the District and that a further report, including costings and a timetable for appointing Charter Trustees, be presented to the Committee and to Council in due course.

22/25

TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND PROCUREMENT SERVICES PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MEETING AND WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS TO BE OF SO URGENT A NATURE THAT IT CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING

There was no urgent business to consider on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 6.19 p.m.

Chairman