

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

WEDNESDAY 25TH MARCH 2026, AT 6.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillors K.J. May (Leader), S. J. Baxter (Deputy Leader),
S. T. Nock, K. Taylor, S. A. Webb and P. J. Whittaker

Officers: Mr. G. Revans, Ms. D. Goodall, Ms J. Willis,
Ms. A. Delahunty and Mrs J. Gresham

87/25 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

88/25 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

89/25 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE CABINET HELD ON 6TH MARCH 2026**

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 6th March 2026 were submitted for Members' consideration.

Members raised that following the meeting an error had been identified in the following resolution which referenced a table that had included an error.

The Interim Director of Finance be authorised to make payments under section 90(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 from the collection fund by ten equal instalments between April 2026 to March 2027 as detailed below:-

	Precept (£)	Surplus/Deficit on Collection Fund (£)	Total to Pay (£)
Worcestershire County Council	67,631,975.84	76,853.64	67,708,829.48
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	11,772,603.70	13,865.63	11,786,469.33
Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority	4,118,298.75	13,950.93	4,132,249.68

The correct table should have read: -

	Precept (£)	Surplus/Deficit on Collection Fund (£)	Total to Pay (£)
Worcestershire County Council	67,631,975.84	76,853.64	67,708,829.48
Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia	11,772,603.70	13,865.63	11,786,469.33
Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority	4,118,298.75	4,862.25	4,123,161.00

This error had now been resolved and a Decision taken under Urgency Procedure Rules on 18th March 2026. Members requested that this be noted in the minutes for the Council meeting that also took place on 6th March 2026 prior to their publication.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 6th March 2026 be approved as a true and accurate record.

90/25

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 10TH FEBRUARY 2026

Members considered the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 10th February 2026. It was noted there were no outstanding recommendations from this meeting.

It was confirmed that no reports due for consideration at this Cabinet meeting were pre-scrutinised by the Board at its meeting held on 24th March 2026.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 10th February 2026 be noted.

91/25

SHARED HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2026-2031

The Housing Development & Strategy Manager presented the Shared Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2026-2031 for Members' consideration.

In doing so the following was highlighted:

- The Homelessness Act 2002 required all housing authorities to have a homelessness strategy in place which was based on a review of all forms of homelessness in their local authority area.

- It was intended that this Strategy would sit under the existing Worcestershire Strategic Housing Board Plan.
- In developing the Strategy, a comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of homelessness across the local authority areas was carried out. This included engaging those who had a lived experience of homelessness, rough sleeping and domestic abuse. A consultation event was held on 30th September 2025 with partners and stakeholders, to consider housing from both a strategic and client-based perspective. This event included partners from a variety of statutory and voluntary organisations. Going forward the approach to homelessness and rough sleeping would move from crisis to prevention.
- The new Shared Homelessness Strategy, in partnership with Redditch Borough Council, Malvern Hills District Council, Wychavon District Council and Wyre Forest District Council, built on the success of the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-25, which emphasised prevention, intervention, recovery and joined-up systems, which were core themes echoed in the new National Plan. Members were informed that Worcester City Council were not involved in this Strategy and had decided to implement a separate strategy designed to address the specific homelessness and rough sleeping situation experienced in Worcester City area. The local authorities aimed to eliminate unlawful use of Bed and Breakfast facilities for families (beyond statutory short stays) and improve the quality of temporary accommodation and aimed to halve long-term rough sleeping.
- Local authorities were expected to tackle the structural causes of homelessness by building more affordable and social homes and support the reform of the private rented sector by working with landlords and tenants to help them to sustain their accommodation where possible.
- The new Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant would provide funding to develop services to support the strategy. Members had previously considered a report which had provided detail on spending priorities for the next three years. Members queried the allocation for this grant. It was explained that the funding was allocated as follows:
 - Total allocation over three years - £1,636,130
 - Homelessness and Rough Sleeping allocation – £1,474,308
 - Domestic Abuse Grant allocation - £111,315
 - Renters' Rights Act allocation - £50,497

Members thanked Officers for the comprehensive report on such an important matter. It was noted that there was a typographical error contained within the report at paragraph 2.6. It was confirmed that the Councils involved in this Strategy were confirmed as Redditch Borough Council, Malvern Hills District Council, Wychavon District Council and Wyre Forest District Council.

Members noted that homelessness was a statutory duty for the Council, and the Strategy must be agreed, once the consultation had taken place, in order for the Council to continue to be compliant.

It was queried why Worcester City Council had opted out of this Strategy. Officers explained that the needs within the Worcester City area were specific, with greater numbers of homelessness and rough sleepers experienced. Worcester City Council required a more bespoke strategy that met specific needs. However, it was noted by Members that a collaborative approach would have been positive in order for Councils across Worcestershire to share experiences in terms of homelessness and rough sleeping.

In terms of the Action Plan contained within the Strategy there was a large number of actions that needed to be undertaken. Members queried how would this be implemented and how would the success of the implementation be measured? It was noted that a local action plan would be produced which would help to assess the more specific actions and outcomes for Bromsgrove.

Members were interested as to whether there would be an impact as a result of the new Renters' Rights Act legislation. Officers explained that there may have been more landlords exiting the market and serving Section 21 No Fault Eviction Notices prior to the implementation of the Renters' Rights Act but once in force the only way to end a tenancy would be through breaching the tenancy agreement for example rent arrears and anti-social behaviour or because the landlord wanted to sell or move into the property. This gave housing options services an opportunity to work with landlords to try, wherever possible to sustain the tenancy and avoid the household being made homeless. If a landlord did decide to sell the property there would be time limits on when a rental property could be let again following its removal from the rental market. Landlords would need to provide an

information sheet produced by the Government to their tenants to confirm the changes to their rights. There was some concern on how much awareness landlords had in terms of the details within the new legislation.

RESOLVED that the draft Shared Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031 and action plan be approved for public consultation for six weeks starting 13th April 2026.

92/25

PLANNING ADVISORY SERVICE REVIEW

The Executive Director presented the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Review for the consideration of Cabinet. In doing so, the following was highlighted:

- The review covered the Bromsgrove District Council's Local Plan production and the Development Management decision making framework.
- PAS noted that the Planning service was operating in a complex environment in a District that was made up of eighty-nine per cent Green Belt and had only 2.4 years of housing land supply left which led to speculative development.
- The report noted that the Council was currently under No Overall Control (NOC). This had led to a greater need for cross party collaboration.
- Development Management processes were broadly very sound. However, early engagement between Members and Officers was not always consistent with regard to applications.
- The Review had noted that Planning was increasingly being viewed through a party-political lens rather than a shared Corporate Priority.
- Trust needed to be rebuilt between Members and Officers.
- There were significant obstacles in meeting the Local Development Plan timetable, not least in the absence of the national plan making regulations and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
- There was a need to embed governance arrangements in order to foster cross-party consensus around the Local Plan. This would mean development of a compelling spatial vision, and the completion of the evidence base and working with key partners such as Worcestershire County Council.
- PAS noted that the Council must create an environment where behaviours reflected shared goals rather than individual political agendas.

- The report made it clear that Planning was a key Corporate Risk.
- The political leadership and senior managers needed to support and enable Officers and Members to make difficult but necessary decisions.
- It was noted that Bromsgrove District Council's Planning service was at a critical juncture, and that leadership and senior management must have a clear opportunity to address the current risks but also set a new tone for how Councillors, Officers and senior leadership worked together, collectively taking responsibility for how Planning shaped the future of the District.
- As a result of the Review, fifteen recommendations were made - eight related to Development Management and the decision-making process and seven to the Local Plan development. The recommendations aimed to build consensus, develop an agreed vision, training, resources and improved partner relations. Officers had drawn up an action plan as to how the recommendations could best be delivered, these were included in Appendix 2 to the report.
- The PAS Review had been presented to Group Leaders at a meeting held on 28th January 2026. It was also pre-scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 10th February 2026. The points raised by the Board were included in Appendix 3 to the report; and the recommendation in respect of joint Member and Officer Planning training was reflected in the action plan.
- A key recommendation from the Review in order to build political consensus, was that a cross-party Working Group be established with a defined, politically balance membership proportionate to Group size. Given it was important to move things forward – including responding to consultation on the National Planning Framework by Group Leaders - this Local Plan Cross Party Working Group (LPCPWG) should be established with immediate effect. It was highlighted that this had taken place and that the LPCPWG had already met twice.
- A meeting with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee had also taken place. This had resulted in some suggestions regarding the operation of the Planning Committee being agreed and implemented as soon as practicable. A number of other matters that needed more in-depth consideration had been referred to the Constitution Review Working Group.
- A draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) had been produced and sent to Worcestershire County Council (WCC), for comment and discussion.
- Resourcing requirements had been identified for both the Local Plan and Development Management areas. These had

recognised that additional staff were required in both areas and also due to the increase in Planning applications. These additional roles would be funded through Planning income or if necessary, from the Financial Resilience Reserve Fund.

- It should be noted that the Development Management element of the Review and report was paid for by the Planning Advisory Service and was therefore carried out at no cost to the Council. The Local Plan element cost a total of £17,744.
- Members were asked to note that failure to adopt a new Local Plan prior to LGR in April 2028 created uncertainty over Plan ownership, as the new Authority would have the final decision on adoption and implementation. The Council had written to Wyre Forest District Council regarding the potential for a North Worcestershire Local Plan and this was rejected in favour of a single District Plan for their area.
- A significant Risk Implications section had been included in this report.

Following the presentation of the report there was a detailed discussion which included:

- Governance of the LPCPWG – Cabinet was informed that a suggestion had been made by some Members that the membership of the Working Group be made up of two Members from each political group within the Council rather than it being politically balanced. However, it was noted that the PAS Review had stated that the new LPCPWG had a ‘defined membership proportionate to group sizes’ within the Council. In terms of the Chairman of the LPCPWG, there had been discussions regarding the potential of an Officer being appointed to this role. The PAS Review had however, suggested the possibility of the Working Group being chaired by the Leader of the Council (which was the current arrangement) or relevant Assistant Director. However, it was noted that the preferred arrangement was that this be a Member-led Working Group. Members discussed the possibility of the appointment of an ‘independent’ Chairman particularly as this matter was highly emotive for both Members and residents. Members queried whether it would be possible for a member of the PAS Review peer team or the Legal Counsel who currently provided advice to the Working Group to chair the meetings. It was suggested that this approach might provide a clear narrative and impartial advice in terms of the development of the Local Plan. Officers undertook to look into the chairing of the LPCPWG further and update Members regarding the options accordingly. It

was important for Members to understand if the external chairing approach was taken that it could incur significant costs for the Council and that governance arrangements in terms of Chairman's casting votes would need to be carefully considered.

- Members were clear that this matter must move forward quickly and appropriately. Particularly due to the deadlines imposed by the Government. It was noted that if a collective decision could not be made by Members, there was the risk of Government intervention in plan-making which would see decisions on the future direction of growth for Bromsgrove being taken away from the Council. Collective decision-making and cross-party working was key in order to provide the best outcomes for the residents of the District.
- A significant amount of pressure was currently being placed on Officers. This had been raised as part of the PAS Review which had highlighted Officer ill-health and burnout. This was something that must be avoided and Members should aim to be 'on the same page' in terms of the decisions making process going forward.
- Cabinet was keen that this be a transparent process. Meetings with individuals or small groups of Members should be avoided, as detailed in the PAS report, in order to ensure transparency of the process and encourage cross party working and collective decision making. It was important that decisions be made through the LPCPWG. If any specific areas needed to be discussed outside of these meetings they should be carried out at Group Leader level, in line with the usual approach taken in these matters. Discussions and decisions made by the LPCPWG could then be communicated to all Members at Planning Advisory Meetings open to all Members.
- Draft Terms of Reference (ToR) of the LPCPWG – These were still to be agreed, and Officers were undertaking work to move this forward. It was hoped that the draft ToR would be considered and agreed at the next meeting of the LPCPWG. It was noted that (as detailed in the previous bullet point) that the ToR should be agreed at a meeting of the LPCPWG.
- Timeline of decision making for the Local Development Plan – Members queried when the final decision for the Local Development Plan needed to be made. Although it was noted there was a Government deadline of December 2026, it was hoped that a collective decision be made by June 2026. This would ensure that the Council was in the best position to start the implementation of the Local Plan prior to LGR.

- Adoption of the PAS Recommendations – it was noted that all recommendations made as a result of the PAS Review be adopted by the Council including those in respect of the Planning Committee. It was confirmed that this would be the case. Any recommendations that needed to be considered by the Constitution Review Working Group would be referred accordingly. In terms of Member and Officer training as detailed within the report, Officers were currently liaising with training providers for Green and Grey Belt training, and a Local Plan and Planning Committee workshops was also in the process of being arranged. It was hoped that most of these sessions would be completed prior to the start of the new municipal year. Officers will be meeting with the Planning Advisory Service to discuss the wider training programme that was recommended.
- The Cabinet Member for Planning, Strategic Housing and Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) had been approached by Ward Members who wished to discuss matters regarding the relevant Wards in order to better understand the process. These meetings could be facilitated with representatives from the Legal and Planning teams in attendance as appropriate.
- A typographical error was highlighted in paragraph 5.1 contained within the report.

Following the detailed discussion, Members thanked the PAS peer team for carrying out a robust and detailed review. Thanks were also extended to all Officers and Members involved in the review and preparation of the report.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The findings of the Planning Advisory Service (“PAS”) Report dated January 2026 be noted.
- 2) The comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding consideration of the PAS Report noted.
- 3) The recommendations made by the PAS be accepted and implemented.
- 4) The progress made to date as set out in the report be noted and the Planning Advisory Service Recommendations Action Plan be adopted.

93/25

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,

**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 7.08 p.m.

Chairman