

Electoral Matters Committee

11 June

2026

Establishment of a Working Group to Consider Future Local Governance Arrangements

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Karen May, Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Claire Felton, Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services
Report Author	Melissa Bassett Job Title: Senior Electoral Services Officer Contact email: melissa.bassett@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Contact Tel: 01527 587014
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Council Priority	All
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Electoral Matters Committee RESOLVE that:-

- 1) A cross-party working group be established, comprised of the Electoral Matters Committee together with any other interested members, to undertake preparatory work in relation to future local governance arrangements within Bromsgrove District Council**
- 2) The proposed indicative timetable set out in appendix 1 be approved as the basis for the working group's preparatory work**
- 3) That a request be made to the relevant body for provision to be included for the appointment of Charter Trustees, to allow for the safeguarding of historic civic regalia and other historic items in the event that no parish or town council is in place for the Bromsgrove area on the reorganisation date.**

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the Annual Council meeting held on 20 May 2026, Council resolved to establish a cross-party working group to undertake preparatory work

in relation to future local governance arrangements within Bromsgrove District.

- 2.2 The motion was brought forward in the context of Local Government Reorganisation. Subject to the final statutory arrangements, Bromsgrove District Council is expected to be replaced by a new unitary authority in 2028. This means that the current district tier of local representation and service delivery will no longer exist in its present form.
- 2.3 This creates a need to consider how local governance should operate for communities across Bromsgrove in the future. The preparatory work will therefore look at the options available, the issues that matter to residents and stakeholders, and whether there is a case for taking forward any formal changes to parish governance.
- 2.4 One possible route for considering changes to parish governance is a Community Governance Review (CGR). A CGR is the statutory process through which a principal council may review and make recommendations about parish governance. This can include the creation, alteration, grouping or abolition of parishes, the creation of parish or town councils, and changes to parish electoral arrangements.
- 2.5 The Council has not, at this stage, resolved to commence a formal CGR. The work of the cross-party working group is preparatory in nature and is intended to help inform whether any further action should be taken. This will include undertaking an engagement exercise to seek the views of residents, stakeholders and local organisations on future local governance arrangements, including whether there is support for a potential CGR.
- 2.6 The findings from the engagement exercise will be considered by the working group before it prepares its conclusions and recommendations. These will then be reported back to the Electoral Matters Committee, before any recommendations are considered by Full Council.

3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 3.1 The establishment of a working group will allow Members to lead a structured engagement exercise with residents, stakeholders and local organisations before any decision is made on whether to commence a formal CGR.

- 3.2 This preparatory stage is important because any future changes to local governance, including the possible creation of a new town or parish council, could have practical, financial and democratic implications for residents, elected Members, existing parish councils and any successor authority.
- 3.3 The purpose of the preparatory work is to help develop a clearer understanding of what future local governance could look like in Bromsgrove following Local Government Reorganisation. This includes understanding the views of residents and stakeholders, the level of support for any potential changes, and the issues that would need to be considered before any formal CGR is commenced.
- 3.4 It is proposed that the working group's preparatory work will include a engagement exercise. The engagement material will need to give residents enough information to respond meaningfully. This is likely to include clear information on what parish and town councils can do, how they are funded, indicative precept implications, possible benefits and limitations, how Local Government Reorganisation may affect local governance, and how any local arrangements could sit alongside a future unitary authority.
- 3.5 The working group's preparatory work is expected to include the following areas:
- Agreeing and undertaking the engagement exercise, including engagement material, survey questions, maps and explanatory information
 - Analysing engagement responses and wider evidence
 - Reviewing existing parish, ward and community boundaries
 - Identifying unparished areas and any neighbouring parish areas where boundary tidying may need to be considered
 - Reviewing examples of town and parish council models, including different levels of function, service delivery and precept requirement
 - Considering alternative forms of neighbourhood level governance and how these may operate in the context of Local Government Reorganisation
 - Consider the broad financial and resource implications of any potential options

Before compiling the working group's findings and reporting back to electoral Matters Committee before taking recommendations to Full Council.

- 3.6 The working group will be advisory and will not itself make final decisions on whether to commence a CGR or approve any final governance recommendations. Its role will be to lead the engagement exercise, review the evidence, compile findings and report back to the Electoral Matters Committee.
- 3.7 Following consideration by the Electoral Matters Committee, any recommendations requiring a formal Council decision would be reported to Full Council. This would include any recommendation to commence a formal CGR.
- 3.8 To assist with scheduling and Member availability, meetings of the working group may take place online where appropriate. This will support flexibility in arranging meetings and help ensure that the group can progress the preparatory work within the indicative timetable.
- 3.9 The timetable at Appendix 1 is indicative. It has been prepared on the basis that the working group will undertake an engagement exercise and evidence gathering during 2026, before reporting its findings to Electoral Matters Committee and then Full Council.
- 3.10 If Full Council later resolves to commence a formal CGR, a separate statutory timetable will be required. This would need to allow sufficient time for terms of reference, public consultation, analysis of representations, draft recommendations, further consultation where required, final recommendations and the production of resulting Reorganisation of Community Governance Order.

Appointment of Charter Trustees

- 3.11 As part of the preparatory work for the Structural Changes Order, The Council has the opportunity to provide input into its contents, including a provision for the appointment of Charter Trustees.
- 3.12 As we are unable to predetermine the outcome of any future Community Governance Review, the appointment of charter trustees would provide a mechanism for safeguarding civic regalia, such as the Chairman's chain, together with any other relevant historic items, in the event that no parish or town council is in place for the Bromsgrove area on the reorganisation date.
- 3.13 The Charter Trustees Regulations 2009 state "Charter trustees may acquire, or accept gifts of, and hold historic or ceremonial property (other than land and buildings) and, in particular, charters, insignia and plate, relating to the charter trustee area and may execute any work

(including works of maintenance or improvement) incidental to or consequential on the acquisition, acceptance or holding.”

3.10 Charter Trustees are usually councillors of the successor authority elected to represent the area of the predecessor local government area.

3.11 If as the result of a Community Governance Review, any Town or Parish council is created, the Charter Trustees are dissolved automatically.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no significant direct financial implications arising from the establishment of the working group or the undertaking of preparatory work at this stage.

4.2 The main resource implication will be officer time in supporting the working group, preparing engagement material, reviewing evidence, analysing engagement responses and preparing reports for consideration by the Electoral Matters Committee and Full Council.

4.3 Limited costs associated with the engagement exercise can be met from within the existing Electoral Services budget. This may include costs such as targeted social media advertising, the production of engagement material, mapping information, or other reasonable measures to support public awareness and engagement.

4.4 If the working group recommends that a formal Community Governance Review should be commenced, any further financial implications will need to be considered as part of a separate report to Full Council. This would include any additional consultation costs, officer resource requirements, legal input, mapping work, implementation costs and any financial implications associated with the creation or alteration of parish governance arrangements.

4.5 Any ongoing financial implications for residents, including any potential parish or town council precept, would be considered as part of the evidence and consultation material. No decision on the creation of a new parish or town council, or any associated precept, is being made as part of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The establishment of the working group and the undertaking of preparatory engagement exercise do not, in themselves, commence a formal Community Governance Review (CGR).
- 5.2 The engagement proposed at this stage is preparatory and non-statutory. It is intended to inform the working group's consideration of future local governance arrangements and whether there is a basis for recommending that a formal CGR should be commenced.
- 5.3 Care will need to be taken to ensure that the engagement material is clear about the status of the exercise and does not imply that the Council has already decided to commence a CGR or to create, alter or abolish any parish or town council arrangements.
- 5.4 Any future recommendation to commence a formal CGR would require a further report to Full Council. At that stage the proposed terms of reference, statutory timetable, consultation requirements, decision-making process and any resulting Order would need to comply with The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS

Local Government Reorganisation

- 6.1 The proposal is directly linked to Local Government Reorganisation. Subject to the final statutory arrangements, Bromsgrove District Council is expected to be replaced by a new unitary authority in 2028. The preparatory work will help Members consider what local governance arrangements may be appropriate for communities in Bromsgrove in that context.
- 6.2 The working group will consider how future local governance arrangements could operate alongside a new unitary authority. This may include consideration of parish and town council arrangements, the position of currently unparished areas, possible boundary issues, and alternative forms of neighbourhood-level governance.
- 6.3 The work will not determine the governance arrangements of the future unitary authority. Any arrangements such as neighbourhood area committees, or other structures established by the new authority, would be a matter for the successor authority and any relevant statutory framework. However, the engagement exercise can help gather local

views on the type of neighbourhood-level representation and engagement that residents and stakeholders consider important following reorganisation.

- 6.4 The timing of any future CGR will need to be considered alongside the wider Local Government Reorganisation timetable. If a shadow authority is established before or during any formal CGR process, it may be appropriate to consult or engage with the shadow authority before final recommendations are made, particularly where the outcome of a CGR could have implications for future local governance arrangements, local representation, assets, services, or the relationship between parish and town councils and the new unitary authority.
- 6.5 The preparatory work undertaken by the working group and any subsequent work on a CGR will therefore need to remain flexible and take account of any further statutory guidance, implementation arrangements or transitional governance requirements arising from Local Government Reorganisation. This will help ensure that any future recommendation to commence a CGR is timed appropriately and is capable of being considered in the context of the emerging unitary arrangements.

Relevant Council Priority

- 6.6 Work on local governance arrangements supports all the Council's current priorities.

Climate Change Implications

- 6.7 There are no direct climate change implications arising from the establishment of the working group or the undertaking of preparatory engagement exercise.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 6.8 The engagement exercise will need to be designed so that residents and stakeholders have a fair opportunity to take part. This will include consideration of accessibility, digital exclusion, language needs where relevant, and the need to ensure that engagement material is clear and understandable.
- 6.9 Officers intend to work with the Council's Engagement and Equalities Officer when developing the engagement material and approach. This

will help ensure that any engagement is accessible, inclusive and designed to support meaningful engagement from a broad range of residents and stakeholders.

- 6.10 The working group will need to consider whether any particular communities or groups may be affected differently by potential changes to local governance arrangements. This will be particularly relevant if any future recommendations relate to the creation of new parish or town council arrangements, changes to boundaries, or changes to local representation.
- 6.11 Any future report recommending the commencement of a formal Community Governance Review, or any specific governance changes, would need to consider equalities implications in more detail and, where appropriate, be supported by an equality impact assessment.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The main risks are that the engagement exercise is misunderstood as the start of a formal Community Governance Review, or that expectations are raised about outcomes that have not yet been agreed.
- 7.2 These risks will be managed by ensuring that engagement material is clear about the preparatory nature of the exercise, the role of the working group, and the decision-making route through the Electoral Matters Committee and Full Council.
- 7.3 There is also a risk that engagement responses are not representative of the wider community. This will be mitigated by using a range of engagement methods, including online engagement, targeted communications and appropriate support from the Council's Engagement and Equalities Officer.

8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – Indicative Timetable for Working Group engagement exercise and Reporting

Electoral Matters Committee
2026

11 June

9. REPORT SIGN OFF

Department	Name and Job Title	Date
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Karen May, Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling	
Assistant Director	Claire Felton, Assistant Director of Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services	28/05/2026
Financial Services	Deb Goodall	
Legal Services	Nicola Cummings	29/05/2026