

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET

17TH JUNE 2026, AT 6.00 P.M.

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

Officers: Mr. G. Revans, Mr. J. Walton, Mrs. R. Egan, Mr. M. Bough, Mrs. H. Mole, Ms. A. Delahunty, Ms. R. McElliott, Mrs. J. Bayley-Hill and Mrs E. Davies

1/26 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S. A. Webb.

Cabinet was informed that Councillor K. Taylor would be arriving late for the meeting, however he would be in attendance.

2/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3/26 TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD ON 20TH APRIL 2026

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 20th April 2026 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 20th April 2026 be approved as a true and accurate record.

4/26 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 14TH APRIL 2026

It was noted that there were no outstanding recommendations from the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 14th April 2026.

RESOLVED that the minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 14th April 2026 be noted.

5/26

APPOINTMENTS TO THE SHAREHOLDERS COMMITTEE 2026/27

The Principal Democratic Services Officer presented a report concerning appointments to the Shareholders Committee for the 2026/27 municipal year.

The Committee was advised that, as the Shareholders Committee was a sub-committee of the Cabinet and formed part of the governance structure for Spadesbourne Homes Limited, it was the Cabinet's responsibility to appoint Members to serve on the Committee. This included the appointment of a Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

It was further noted that only members of the Cabinet were eligible to serve on the Committee. However, Group Leaders would continue to be invited to attend meetings of the Shareholders Committee and participate in debates if they so wished, although they would not have voting rights.

RESOLVED that

1) The following Members of the Cabinet be appointed to sit on the Shareholders Committee for the 2026/27 municipal year:

- Councillor K.J. May
- Councillor S.T. Nock
- Councillor K. Taylor
- Councillor S.A. Webb
- Councillor P.J. Whittaker

2) Councillor K.J. May be appointed as Chairman of the Committee for the 2026/27 municipal year; and

3) Councillor P.J. Whittaker be appointed the Vice Chairman of the Committee for the 2026/27 municipal year.

6/26

CABINET APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2026/27

The Principal Democratic Services Officer presented the Cabinet Appointments to Outside Bodies 2026/27 report for Members' consideration.

It was noted that Council had made a number of appointments to Outside Bodies at the Annual Council meeting held on 20th May 2026. However, several appointments related to executive functions and, as such, these were to be determined by the Cabinet.

RESOLVED that

the nominations to Outside Bodies as listed in Appendix 1 to the minutes be approved.

SHARED HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2026-2031

The Housing Development and Strategy Manager presented a report on the Shared Homelessness Strategy 2026-2031.

The Committee was reminded that the draft Shared Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2031 had been approved for public consultation by the Cabinet on 25th March 2026. The consultation had subsequently been completed, and responses had been incorporated into the action plan where appropriate.

It was reported that the strategy included Local Outcomes Framework measures provided by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). MHCLG had reviewed the strategy and confirmed that it was compliant, although a number of recommended actions had been suggested which had been incorporated into the action plan.

The framework utilised a range of national outcome indicators to assess performance, including:

- The rate of households with children in temporary accommodation (per 1,000 households)
- The number of families in Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation for over six weeks
- The percentage of duties owed where homelessness was prevented or relieved
- The number of people sleeping rough on a single night
- The number of people sleeping rough over the month who were long-term rough sleepers

The Committee was informed that delivery of the strategy would be overseen by the Housing Strategy Team and would sit under the existing Worcestershire Housing Board Plan.

In respect of financial implications, it was confirmed that the Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant would provide funding to support the development of services aligned with the strategy. A report detailing spending priorities for the subsequent three years had already been presented to Members.

It was highlighted that the Council had a statutory duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to produce a homelessness strategy, alongside compliance with the Homelessness Reduction Act, the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the Renters Rights Act 2025.

With regard to Local Government Reorganisation, Members were reassured that the strategy had been developed to be adaptable for incorporation into either one or two unitary authorities.

An Equality Impact Assessment had been completed, which demonstrated a positive outcome. It was noted that officers would continue to monitor impacts.

The risks associated with the Cabinet not approving the strategy were outlined. It was reported that this would result in the Council not being legally compliant. Furthermore, it was considered likely that households threatened with homelessness, or those in housing need, would have limited options for support to sustain or secure suitable accommodation. This could lead to:

- Increased B&B costs
- Increased rough sleeping in the District
- Impacts on physical and mental health, educational achievement, ability to work and similar through increased homelessness

Following the presentation, Members discussed the report in detail and made the following comments:

- The Cabinet Member for Planning and Strategic Housing expressed thanks to the Housing Development and Strategy Manager for the report.
- It was noted that the action plan was extensive and Members queried whether this would pose a delivery challenge. Officers advised that a meeting was scheduled in the coming weeks to review the action plan and ensure that Bromsgrove District Council could deliver the relevant elements. Members were reassured that collaborative work with partner authorities was ongoing.
- Members queried the potential impact of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 on the strategy and whether a future review would be required. Officers advised that the Act had already begun to influence the housing sector prior to its enactment. Increased regulatory requirements had led to some landlords exiting the sector or selling properties, although it was anticipated that impacts would stabilise over time, particularly following the abolition of Section 21 evictions. It was hoped that landlords would become more willing to work with local authorities to manage tenancies, contributing to greater sector stability.
- The requirement for landlords to provide Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) and the associated costs of improving energy efficiency were discussed. Officers advised that minimum energy efficiency standards were measured through EPCs. It was noted that ratings reflected typical energy costs and could be improved through measures such as the installation of solar panels.

RECOMMENDED that the Shared Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2031 be approved.

8/26

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & REGENERATION SERVICE DELIVERY

The Assistant Director for Regeneration and Property Services presented a report on Economic Development and Regeneration Service Delivery for the Committee's consideration.

The report sought approval for the release of £510,000 from the Economic Growth Reserve to continue funding key economic development and regeneration activities until 2028.

The Committee was advised that the programme operated within the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) funding model. It was noted that funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) was due to cease and that no replacement funding stream had yet been confirmed.

Members were informed that, should the funding not be released, Bromsgrove residents would receive a significantly reduced level of support, limited to that provided through the Worcestershire Growth Hub. It was confirmed that sufficient reserves were available and that funding would remain for other programmes.

In relation to Betaden, it was reported that officers were continuing to finalise the details of the Service Level Agreement (SLA), with some negotiations still outstanding. The original proposal had been that the Council would make a financial contribution in return for a guaranteed number of places on the programme. However, the number of places proposed significantly exceeded previous levels of take-up. It had subsequently been agreed that the Council would fund workshop places on a demand-led basis, whereby a fee would be payable for each business securing a place. The precise amount remained under negotiation.

Following presentation of the report, Members discussed the following points:

- The Leader emphasised the importance of the funding, particularly in the context of Local Government Reorganisation. It was noted that the Worcestershire Leaders Board had confirmed that it would provide funding to the Worcestershire Growth Hub and Betaden. It was further highlighted that approximately 6 per cent of young people were not in employment, a situation which had been affected by increases in National Insurance rates.
- Members queried how success would be measured. Officers advised that the SLAs would set out how businesses would be supported and that data

would be collected on how funding had been utilised. Progress updates would be reported back to the Cabinet.

- Clarification was sought regarding how the funding would be allocated and whether it would support businesses in employing additional staff. Officers advised that the Growth Hub employed staff to provide business support and guidance on available funding opportunities, some of which could be used towards staffing. Betaden provided programme and workshop places offering one-to-one business support. Careers Worcestershire utilised funding to employ staff who worked with young people to support them into employment, including assistance with the interview process where barriers such as transport or confidence issues existed.
- Members welcomed the support for new businesses and young people, particularly in helping school leavers into employment. It was queried how this aligned with apprenticeship schemes and whether signposting would be provided. Officers confirmed that, although the funding focused on youth employment, Careers Worcestershire also supported apprenticeship schemes, and appropriate signposting could therefore be provided.

[Councillor K. Taylor arrived at the meeting during consideration of this item at 6.33pm]

RESOLVED that:

- 1) Earmarked reserves be released to fund economic development and regeneration activities as follows:
 - a. Worcestershire Growth hub - £140,000
 - b. Careers Worcestershire - £300,000
 - c. Betaden - £70,000

9/26

ENFORCEMENT AND CIVIL PENALTY POLICY

The Strategic Housing Services Manager presented the Enforcement and Civil Penalty Notice Policy report.

The Committee was informed that this report followed on from the previous report presented to the Cabinet regarding the Renters' Rights Act 2025. The Private Sector Housing Enforcement and Civil Penalty Notice Policy had been reviewed and re-written in response to the Act as it required significant alteration due to new enforcement duties arising.

Members were advised that the policy aligned with national best practice, including the Association of Chief Environmental Health Officers (ACEHO)

model Enforcement and Civil Penalty Policy, and established a clear, consistent and legally robust framework for enforcement decision making and the application of civil penalties.

The policy applied to all private sector housing-related enforcement functions exercised by the Council, including private rented housing, owner-occupied housing, empty homes, Houses in Multiple Occupation and relevant site-based accommodation, where statutory powers applied.

It set out the Council's approach to enforcing statutory requirements relating to, among other matters:

- misuse of possession grounds
- unlawful rent practices, including rent bidding
- failure to provide prescribed tenancy information
- discriminatory letting practices
- compliance with the Private Rented Sector Database (once in force)

The implementation of the policy was expected to contribute to improved housing conditions, reduced health risks and increased tenancy security and within the District.

Members' attention was drawn to the matrix of civil penalties notices, which was based on national best practice. It took into account the size of a landlord's property portfolio and the number of offences.

In considering the report, Members commented on the following points:

- The complexity of the matrix. Officers acknowledged this and advised that the complexity was reflected in the level of detail contained within the policy. It was further noted that any appeals against decisions would be determined by a first-tier tribunal (Property Chamber).
- Concerns were raised that the listed costs for offences appeared severe at first glance. However, it was noted that the policy set out an initial informal approach for some offences, providing an opportunity for issues to be resolved before any formal enforcement action was taken. Officers clarified that the level of fines had been set by Government and that the Council had adopted a staged approach in line with national best practice. It was further explained that, where appropriate, an advisory and information-led approach would be taken in the first instance, although certain breaches, such as confirmed illegal evictions, would result in a civil penalty notice or prosecution.
- Members queried whether the policy provided protection for landlords in situations where tenants caused damage to properties. It was noted that the Renters' Rights Act 2025 was primarily focused on tenant protection. Officers clarified that the policy related specifically to enforcement

standards for property conditions and tenant protections, rather than landlord recourse. It was further explained that landlords retained the ability to take action through existing legal routes, including strengthened Section 8 provisions.

- Questions were raised regarding how the Council would identify unregistered landlords. Officers advised that landlords were not currently required to register. However, the Renters' Rights Act 2025 would introduce a national property database requiring registration. It was reiterated that the purpose of the policy was to ensure that tenants lived in safe and suitable accommodation.
- Whether the service had sufficient capacity to deliver against the requirements of the policy. Officers advised that the team had previously been expanded in anticipation of these changes. Whilst demand was high, this had not yet resulted in significant additional pressures. It was further noted that New Burdens funding had been provided by Government, which could support additional resources, such as IT systems or staff training, if required. Staffing levels would continue to be kept under review.
- If there had been any observable impacts arising from recent legislative changes, particularly in relation to homelessness. Officers confirmed that there had been a slight increase in cases linked to Section 21 notices, but this had not represented a significant change overall and Section 21 notices were now abolished.
- It was emphasised that the legislation was focused on tenant protection and that the Council had a duty to ensure that tenants were safeguarded. The policy was described as comprehensive in this regard.
- Members noted that landlords would need to ensure they maintained appropriate records and documentation, including photographic evidence of property condition, in order to demonstrate compliance where issues were raised by tenants.

RESOLVED that

- 1) Members approve the Private Sector Housing Enforcement and Civil Penalty Policy ("the Policy").

RECOMMENDED that

- 2) Delegated authority be granted to the Assistant Director Community & Housing Services, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to update the Policy in line with any legislative or government guidance updates.
- 3) The Scheme of Delegations be updated to reflect the adoption of the Policy and the new Enforcement powers under the Renters Rights Act 2025 in accordance with the wording set out in Appendix 2 to the minutes.

10/26

QUARTER 4 25/26 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Business Improvement Manager presented a report outlining performance across Quarter Four.

Members were advised that the overall position remained stable for the quarter. The key highlights were outlined to the Committee, including that one hundred per cent of major planning applications had been determined, a reduction in the use of temporary accommodation and response times for fly-tipping incidents remained operationally stable. However, it was noted that recycling performance and the proportion of complaints responded to within the ten-day standard, recorded at eighty-five per cent, required improvement.

Following presentation of the report, Members discussed the following matters:

- Members suggested that this positive performance should be more effectively utilised within communications to residents in order to spread the positive message.
- The issue of sickness absence was discussed. Concerns were raised regarding the potential impact on particular service areas, and Members expressed a desire for future reports to distinguish between short-term and long-term sickness absence. It was also suggested that comparative data be provided against neighbouring authorities. Officers confirmed that long-term sickness absence had reduced and that the Council's targets were aligned with the national average, which was approximately seven point eight per cent. It was further acknowledged that Local Government Reorganisation may have had an impact on staff morale and stress levels.
- Performance in respect of business rates collection was noted to be strong.
- Members raised concerns regarding gym membership figures, which were below the target of 3,000 and stood at 2,264 in Quarter Three, with what appeared to be a downward trend. It was confirmed that a report regarding the performance of Sports and Leisure Management (SLM) Limited would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board in July 2026, at which point further detail would be provided. SLM would be in attendance at the meeting.
- In relation to the apparent decline in gym membership figures, officers acknowledged that the way in which the data had been presented had created a potentially misleading impression of a sharp drop. It was suggested that future reporting should present this data more clearly to avoid misinterpretation. It was also noted that the targets set within the report reflected contractual arrangements and were considered ambitious, and these would be reviewed as part of the forthcoming report.

- Members discussed factors influencing gym membership retention, including seasonal variations. Officers advised that membership cancellations occurred at different intervals, commonly after a period of around three months, although some members retained memberships for longer periods. It was noted that SLM monitored membership retention. Members also highlighted the level of competition within the local area and queried whether this was impacting membership levels. Officers confirmed that local competition and the overall offer, including pricing and facilities, would be considered as part of the forthcoming review.

RESOLVED that the overview of Quarter 4 performance for the period January to March 2026 against the Council Plan priorities be noted.

11/26

VAT RECOVERY UPDATED POSITION

The Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer presented a report on the subject of the updated VAT recovery position.

Members were advised that, following the implementation of a new financial system in 2021, a number of issues had arisen, compounded by staff turnover and weaknesses in processes at that time. As a result, VAT returns had not been submitted to HMRC for the period April 2021 to October 2024 and HMRC had therefore been holding funds due to be returned to the Council. A chronology of events had been provided within the report.

It was reported that, once the issue had been identified, it had been agreed with HMRC that Error Correction Notices (ECNs) would be submitted in order to recover the funds. An initial sum of £472,000 had been received in December 2024, which was subsequently reversed through the ECN process. Further work had been undertaken to review the 'General Ledger' and identify additional amounts where VAT had not been appropriately accounted for. A final ECN, submitted on 12th June 2026, totalled £1.79 million, resulting in a net position of approximately £1.76 million due to Bromsgrove District Council from HMRC.

Members were advised that this recovery would have a positive impact on the Council's cash position. It was noted that the accounting for each of the affected years had already been reflected in the Council's accounts and therefore no additional reserves would be created. However, the improved cash position would reduce the need for borrowing and provide increased opportunities for investment. Confirmation from HMRC in relation to the final ECN was yet to be received.

In considering the report, Members had detailed discussion and commented on the following points:

- Reference was made to Redditch Borough Council's position, where a significantly larger sum had been identified. Officers explained that this reflected structural differences between the authorities, including

Redditch's larger budget, larger capital programme and the operation of a Housing Revenue Account, which all led to a higher volume of transactions and associated VAT. It was further noted that Bromsgrove was responsible for billing Redditch for a higher proportion of Shared Services provided between the authorities.

- Members queried the accuracy of the figure for Bromsgrove. Officers advised that, whilst the amount had been calculated based on the information available, it could not be formally confirmed until HMRC had completed its review.
- Concerns were raised regarding previous estimates that had suggested a significantly higher figure. It was noted that the situation was very complex and figures were continually changing until the claim had been submitted to HMRC.
- Discussion took place regarding the VAT treatment of shared services between Bromsgrove and Redditch. Officers explained that as a result of the arrangements i.e. Bromsgrove billing Redditch, the VAT position was offset in Bromsgrove but increased in Redditch. Bromsgrove was not charged VAT on the underlying costs e.g. salaries, but Redditch was charged VAT on the same services as they were purchasing a valuable service from Bromsgrove. This led to a higher recovery of VAT in Redditch than Bromsgrove.
- Members sought clarification on whether Bromsgrove had been disadvantaged by these arrangements. Officers outlined that this was not the case as this was about delayed recovery of VAT, not a benefit. It was noted that the complexity of VAT accounting within shared services made direct comparisons between the authorities difficult.
- Members questioned how the issue had not been identified at an earlier stage. Officers advised that the implementation of a new financial system, combined with staff turnover and a lack of specialist VAT expertise at the time, had contributed to the oversight.
- Further concerns were raised regarding the role of internal and external audit in identifying the issue. Officers clarified that internal audit operated on a risk-based approach and reviewed specific areas rather than providing continuous oversight of all processes. External audit provided assurance on the overall accounts, but delays in the production of accounts for the relevant period had limited this assurance.
- The financial implications of the delayed recovery, including the potential loss of investment income. Officers advised that, whilst this could be estimated, there was no mechanism to reclaim such losses from HMRC.
- The importance of strengthening financial controls and processes was emphasised. It was confirmed that Internal Audit had been tasked with undertaking a review of existing arrangements to provide assurance and identify any necessary improvements.
- Members acknowledged the need to focus on ensuring robust systems were in place going forward.

The Cabinet Member for Finance expressed thanks to the Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer for presenting the report. He noted that securing a net cash recovery represented a positive outcome for the Council's financial position and, as outlined in the report, reflected a

comprehensive retrospective review. It was reiterated that, as these adjustments had already been processed, they constituted a direct improvement to the Council's cash flow rather than impacting on reserves.

The Cabinet Member for Finance emphasised that, when making comparisons with Redditch Borough Council, it was important to recognise the differing structural profiles of the two authorities.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The actions being undertaken to resolve the outstanding VAT matters be noted.
- 2) An expected net cash gain position to be recovered by the council, including the further anticipated recovery of the current Error Correction Note, be noted.
- 3) The improvement of this on the cashflow position be noted and the corporate risk register duly updated to reflect the positive change to the council's cash holding position.
- 4) The Audit, Standards and Governance committee is requested to maintain oversight of the delivery of actions to satisfy any agreed penalty suspension conditions.

12/26

WINDSOR STREET DELIVERY OPTIONS

The Regeneration Programme Manager presented a report on delivery options for Windsor Street.

Members were reminded that, in November 2025, a report had been considered outlining options for the redevelopment of Windsor Street, with Cabinet resolving that the site should be developed for residential purposes in partnership with a Registered Social Landlord (RSL). It was reported that external funding had been secured to de-risk the project without requiring match funding from the Council.

Phase two had commenced recently and included a twelve-month monitoring period. Any overspend was being met from the Levelling Up contingency budget.

Members were advised that discussions had taken place with a number of RSLs. Of the five organisations approached, three had indicated that they were not interested in the site, while two had expressed an interest in acquiring the site to deliver one hundred per cent affordable housing. However, both RSLs had indicated a preference for outright acquisition rather than entering into a partnership arrangement.

On this basis, officers had explored the option of securing outline planning permission prior to disposal, which would also allow the Council to influence the design and reduce potential delays. It was noted that although this was not the original plan, it aligned with the strategic objectives of the site and

RSLs could submit proposals which would allow the Council to retain control over which scheme was selected.

The proposal therefore sought funding of £150,000 from reserves to progress an outline planning application. It was noted that this amount would be replenished upon disposal of the site, which was expected to generate a capital receipt and provide a return on investment.

In considering the report, Members had detailed discussion and commented on the following matters:

- It was highlighted that the proposed development would include affordable housing, which could comprise shared ownership as well as social housing.
- Members queried how the £150,000 figure had been determined. Officers explained that the estimate was based on comparable costs for preparing outline planning applications, including the requirement for surveys, supporting evidence, and external expertise. It was noted that costs could vary depending on the level of detail included within the application.
- Members discussed the level of detail to be included in the planning application, with the view that greater detail could provide enhanced control over the eventual scheme.
- It was suggested that RSLs could be invited to develop proposals that met the Council's requirements prior to submission of a planning application. Officers advised that, following soft market testing, ongoing dialogue with interested RSLs would continue to ensure that proposals reflected viability and local housing needs.
- Timeframes were queried. Officers advised that site remediation was expected to be completed by September 2026 and the twelve-month monitoring period would be completed by September 2027. The planning process was anticipated to take between six and twelve months.
- Members queried whether parts of the site could be used for temporary accommodation to reduce reliance on Bed and Breakfast provision. Officers advised that significant infrastructure would be required to make this feasible and that associated costs would be significant.
- An update was provided on site remediation works, including groundwater monitoring and mitigation measures. It was reported that remediation was being undertaken and monitored in accordance with Environment Agency requirements, with a barrier being installed on one area of the site to prevent further contamination spread.
- Clarification was provided following consultation with the Monitoring Officer, confirming that the Leader could be involved in decisions relating to the progression of a planning application in the Council's capacity as landowner, but not in the determination of the application itself.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The feedback received from Registered Providers be noted.
- 2) Delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director for Regeneration and Property, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to progress an outline planning application for the Windsor Street site for up to 50 residential units.
- 3) Subject to the granting of outline planning permission and completion of Phase 2 remediation works, that the Windsor Street site be disposed of to a Registered Provider.
- 4) Delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director for Regeneration and Property, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder to agree the terms of disposal and select the Registered Provider, following evaluation of proposals against the Council's objectives.
- 5) A budget of up to £150,000 be approved to meet the costs of progressing the outline planning application.

13/26

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 8.03 p.m.

Chairman