B R O M S G R O V E D I S T R I C T C O U N C I L

MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

21ST JULY 2026, AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE SUITE - PARKSIDE

PRESENT: Councillors P. M. McDonald (Chairman), A. M. Dale (Vice-Chairman), S. Ammar, A. Bailes, J. Clarke, D. J. A. Forsythe, C.A. Hotham, B. Kumar, S. A. Robinson, J. D. Stanley and H. D. N. Warren-Clarke

Observers:
Councillor K. J. May – Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Partnerships, Economic Development and Enabling
Councillor S. J. Baxter – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Strategic Housing
Councillor S.T. Nock – Cabinet Member for Finance
Councillor S.A. Webb - Cabinet Member Health and Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture

Officers: Mr. G. Revans, Mr. J. Walton, Ms H. Corredor, Ms R. Egan, Mrs. C. Felton, Mr. M. Bough, Mr. M. Hanwell, Ms R. Millward, Mr C. Wells and Mrs S. Woodfield

Other parties: Mr R. Bell and Mr B. Betteridge (Representatives on behalf of Everyone Active)

3/26 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

The meeting commenced with the Executive Director explaining the procedure for electing the Chairman of the Board. Members were advised that each nomination required a proposer and a seconder and that Members were permitted to propose or second themselves. It was also explained that, in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules in the Constitution, if two or more Members were nominated and no candidate received a clear majority, the candidate with the fewest votes would be removed and a further vote would be taken until one candidate achieved a majority.

Nominations for the election of Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Board for the 2026/27 municipal year were received for the following Members:

Councillor H.D.N. Warren-Clarke proposed that Councillor P.M. McDonald be appointed Chairman of the Board for the 2026/27 municipal year. This was seconded by Councillor B. Kumar.

Councillor S. Robinson proposed that Councillor C. Hotham be appointed Chairman of the Board for the 2026/27 municipal year. This was seconded by Councillor J. Clarke.

A Member raised a point of order after the voting had taken place, querying whether individuals who were not formally Members of the Committee had voted before apologies for absence and named substitutes had been declared. The Member stated that, in their view, substitute Members should not have been able to vote until the item on apologies and substitutes had been dealt with. In response the Democratic Services Officer advised that the relevant substitutions had been received prior to the meeting taking place. The Monitoring Officer also added that the Constitution required the first item of business at the start of the municipal year to be the election of the Chairman and confirmed that in her view, the Constitution had been followed accordingly.

After a show of hands it was

RESOLVED that Councillor P. M. McDonald be appointed as Chairman of the Board for the ensuing municipal year.

4/26 **ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

Nominations were requested for the election of a Vice-Chairman of the Board for the 2026/27 municipal year.

Councillor B. Kumar proposed that Councillor A.M. Dale be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Board for the 2026/27 municipal year. This was seconded by Councillor H.D.N Warren-Clarke.

After a show of hands (including two abstentions) it was

RESOLVED that Councillor A.M. Dale be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Board for the ensuing municipal year.

5/26 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor R. Lambert with Councillor D.J.A. Forsythe in attendance as her named substitute.

6/26 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS**

There were no declarations of interest nor of whipping arrangements.

7/26 FIRST HOMES POLICY REVIEW - PRE-SCRUTINY

The First Homes Policy Review was presented to Members by the Strategic Housing Services Manager.

Members were reminded that the Government had introduced the First Homes policy in 2022. At that time, it had been mandatory for 25% of affordable housing on qualifying Section 106 sites to be delivered as First Homes, however, subsequent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) had removed the mandatory requirement. The policy had therefore been updated to remove the mandatory wording. Officers considered that First Homes should remain within the policy as a product that could still be negotiated with developers where appropriate. It was advised that the Council's preference remained for social rented housing and shared ownership, with shared ownership being the preferred affordable ownership product.

After the presentation, Member discussions were as follows:

- How likely was it that housing developers would agree to the Council's stated preference option for shared ownership when developers were considering affordable housing options? - The Strategic Housing Services Manager responded that developers generally did adhere to specific requirements in relation to tenure.
- Clarity on the position set out in the policy whereby a First Home had not sold and the Council expected compensation. – The Board were advised that because First Homes were discounted products, if a property cannot be sold as a First Home, it could be sold on the open market with 30% of the sale value paid to the Council. A Member suggested that there should be a penalty if the property was lost from the affordable housing stock and that 50% of the sale value be paid back to the Council. In response the Strategic Housing Services Manager advised that the ruling was stipulated within the First Homes policy and therefore would be difficult to revise.
- In order to help balance the affordable housing stock, what powers the Council had to insist that First Homes were built on small developments? – It was confirmed that affordable housing negotiations would proceed on the basis that the Council expected two-thirds social rented housing and one-third affordable home ownership, with shared ownership preferred. However, First Homes could still be used where share ownership was not appropriate or viable.
- Clarification was also provided to Members as requested by the Chairman on the local connection criteria.

RESOLVED that the Council's revised First Homes Policy Review be noted.

8/26 **USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE WITHIN BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

A presentation was provided to Members by the ICT Transformation Manager on Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The key points were as follows:

- AI was becoming part of mainstream business application, including Microsoft 365 Copilot and other automation tools.
- The Council was required to ensure that its use was controlled, transparent and compliant.
- AI use within the Council was limited, governed and mainly used to support productivity and administration.
- Key messages included that AI was becoming part of everyday business systems and that its use would continue to grow.
- The Council's current use of AI was controlled and primarily through Microsoft Copilot and limited automation. AI was not being used for autonomous decision making.
- Staff remained responsible for checking and validating AI-generated output.
- The Council had an AI acceptable use policy in place to manage governance, data protection, bias, transparency and accountability.
- Supplier use of AI was currently limited, although many suppliers were exploring future AI functionality. The current risk position was described as manageable and controlled but requiring continued monitoring.

In summary, the Council had a controlled approach with limited use and focused mainly on productivity. The key challenge would be to ensure that governance, data protection, equality and procurement controls were in place as AI use increased in supplier systems and Council services.

After consideration of the presentation, Members raised the following:

- Some Members felt that the Council's approach to the use of AI seemed cautious compared to other Councils. Examples of AI use in other Local Authorities included chatbots to improve waiting times and data analysis for planning applications. The comments were noted.
- Members noted the 22 licenses purchased by the Council which gave a more in-depth experience of AI. Members requested details of who had been given access to the licences, if access was fairly distributed to staff who could benefit from the licenses, if the Council were getting value for money and how the use was measured. Members suggested that the Council could undertake a simple internal audit by emailing staff to request details on the use of AI. – The ICT Transformation Manager advised that the

licenses had been split amongst individual staff members and not limited to certain service areas or Senior Managers, however, the licenses could be reallocated if required. Feedback was positive and seemed were being well utilised, with staff keen to retain access. Members were informed that with only a small number of licenses purchased, the cost was relatively low. It was explained that productivity measurement was difficult to evaluate as the licenses were used for various tasks such as administrative use and actions required for meetings. The Assistant Director Corporate Services and Transformation informed Members that the cost of 22 licences was approximately £4,000 annually and expressed the view that use was popular and likely to increase and the balance between caution and opportunity would need to be monitored closely. She also advised that a robust way to measure usage could be through the staff survey, as these tracked response rates and also detailed where within the organisation they were received.

- A Member raised climate change implications as detailed within the report and suggested that for the purposes of LGR, the impacts of the usage of AI should be investigated further and risks mitigated. The comment was noted.

RESOLVED that the Use of Artificial Intelligence report be noted.

9/26 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM (LGR) UPDATE**

The Chairman reminded Members that the Board had a previously agreed to establish its own task group on LGR, however, at a subsequent Council meeting, a motion had been passed that Electoral Matters should create a relevant working group and therefore any interests from the Board should be through that route.

The Assistant Director of Corporate Services and Transformation presented the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) update to the Board.

The following key points were reported as follows:

- A significant milestone had been reached with the receipt of the decision from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), whilst some other local authority decisions had been delayed.
- The letter from MHCLG explained the reasons for the decision with references to housing supply, the ability to provide a tailored response, local identity and the use of public consultation in shaping the proposal.
- Once the decision was received the Chief Executive held a briefing with Group Leaders, followed by an all-staff remote briefing with an impressive turnout of approximately 400 attendees. The staff briefing included the decision, assurances, future direction and frequently asked questions (FAQ)s. An all-

member briefing had also been organised to be held for Members.

- Group Leaders across the County had agreed to start working informally and voluntarily as joint committees.
- Once the Structural Change Order (SCO) had passed through Parliament, those groups would become legislative bodies as set out in the SCO.
- External communications had been prepared for either outcome. Messaging was focused on getting behind the decision and maintaining strong implementation and delivery pace. The next focus would move from debating the proposal to delivering it effectively.
- The Board's scrutiny role would be examining whether implementation plans were thorough, robust and properly resourced.
- Existing workstreams would continue, including finance, human resources, information and communication technology, legal, communications and services. However, the services workstream would be expanded and broken down into individual service areas to consider options, costs, models and delivery approaches.
- A full-time Programme Manager and Programme Support Officer had been appointed to work across the seven authorities, initially reporting to the Assistant Director Corporate Services and Transformation. Recruitment for an LGR Programme Director was also underway. It was also hoped that a two-year Programme Director appointment would be made to provide vision and drive for implementation.
- In relation to the SCO, the MHCLG's letter confirmed that initial decisions around transitional arrangements were likely to be shared in draft form with Chief Executives. This would indicate which of the Council's proposals had been agreed by Government and would outline the implementation team. The letter also confirmed that existing Members whose terms would end in May 2027, would have their terms extended to vesting day.
- Feedback had been provided on the election cycle regarding the Government's current proposed 4+1 election cycle, placing the Council out of sync with parish elections, which was not preferred.
- Feedback was also anticipated on warding arrangements and member numbers, with Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) expecting to see a doubling under the proposed approach. A boundary review engagement confirmed that a review could progress properly after the first election to the new shadow authority in May 2027.
- Feedback to Government had also discussed charter trustees for Bromsgrove, focused on preserving civic regalia and ceremonial property.
- Under the agreed North Worcestershire option, the current Chief Executive would be the Returning Officer for the relevant elections.

- Future local governance arrangements engagement had been launched. Communities were being engaged through the website in relation to local identity and how residents might use their community voice in the future context of LGR. This exercise would inform the case for commencing a formal community governance review and would close on 9 August 2026.
- Consideration was being given regarding Member development for the Overview and Scrutiny and Audit, Standards and Governance meetings through the LGA offer and assurance arrangements.

After consideration of the update the Board made the following comments:

- The former portfolio spoke on behalf of the current portfolio holder who had sent his apologies. She thanked Officers for producing a strong proposal, noting that the Council had voted unanimously for the north/side option.
- If the Council were expecting any differences to the agreement, now that there has been a change in the ministerial position? – The Board were assured that Chief Executives had received communications two weeks before the decision, that the timelines would be unchanged. It was also stated that the Council had received no communication suggesting that current Government was less committed to the programme.
- Clarity was sought regarding future plans for supporting adult social care, public health and children's services, with Members querying how services would be allocated across the County area. – The Executive Director explained that some services such as children's services might be split into two larger workstreams including integration and disaggregation. There may also be a possibility for Local Authorities and shared services to collaborate, with an example provided whereby Cumbria County Council utilised the services of the Highways Department for the purposes of disaggregation to analyse salt requirements on their roads. The Assistant Director Corporate Services and Transformation also assured Members that Officers would be assisting staff, including Members to help familiarise staff with the details. A joint committee would be established with responsibility to drive the details, guided by MHCLG until the shadow authority was elected.
- Members queried how community engagement strategies were being carried out to assist residents' awareness of the progression of LGR for residents who did not use social media, suggesting road shows as an alternative solution. – It was advised that the priority for comms was to ensure that residents understood services would be unaffected during the process to vesting day. Members requested prompt communications to reassure residents that they would not notice any immediate change and that service delivery would not be affected. – In response it was advised that the website had been updated

immediately following the decision and the request for further reassurance would be fed back to the comms team.

- What efforts were BDC taking to secure key staff are retained within the Authority to ensure service delivery is unaffected ie HGV drivers and waste services and what was the timeline for senior staff recruitment? – The Executive Director advised that staff would not see considerable change for the foreseeable short/medium term. Members noted that recruitment of the Chief Executive positions would be in September and Senior Manager positions in December, however, most staff would be TUPE'd over to the shadow authority. Evidence from other Local Authorities who had been through LGR had communicated that it took several years to be fully functional. The Executive Director advised Members that regular communication with staff was provided through the Chief Executive FAQs and the intranet's LGR Routes.

RESOLVED that the Local Government Reform (LGR) update be noted.

10/26 **BROMSGROVE SPORTS AND LEISURE CENTRE UPDATE**

The Contracts and Utilities Officer presented the report to Members. Members were reminded that the item had been requested following questions around parking at the site, cleanliness and locker costs.

It was explained that the contract with Everyone Active was entered into in 2017 for a period of 21 years. It was noted that, although the contract had been in place for several years, the Council was still relatively early in the contract term and there remained a significant period left to run.

On contract management, the Contracts and Utilities Officer met with Everyone Active quarterly. These meetings covered key areas including usage numbers, customer feedback, cleanliness, energy efficiency and the activities being delivered at the Centre. The Officer explained that this process allowed both the Council and Everyone Active to discuss performance, identify areas requiring improvement and recognise successes.

It was emphasised that the environment in which the contract had originally been let was different from the current situation. In 2017 there was less competition in the district, the contract pre-dated the Covid-19 pandemic and the leisure market had since changed significantly. It was stated that these changes needed to be understood when considering the current performance of the centre and the wider leisure environment within the district.

In relation to car parking, Members were advised that this had been an ongoing conversation with Everyone Active which included; changes to parking, including free parking from 6.00pm rather than 7.00pm and the introduction of 30 minutes' free parking, had led to a reduced number of complaints or comments about parking charges.

On cleanliness, the Board were informed that leisure centres were difficult buildings to always keep clean, especially during peak periods. It was advised that cleanliness had been raised with Everyone Active around 18 months previously and was recognised as a need for improvement. Customer feedback demonstrated improvement and the contractors were working hard to maintain and improve cleanliness across the Centre.

Regarding locker costs, it was explained that when the centre was built, it had been designed around single use tokens, with fees contributing towards the maintenance and installation of lockers. It was noted that an option could be explored to convert all or a proportion of lockers on the wet side changing area to padlock lockers, allowing users to bring their own padlocks and reducing the need to purchase tokens repeatedly.

On financial implications, it was explained that the Covid-19 pandemic had affected income due to leisure facilities having to close which had affected the income the Leisure Centre could provide and therefore the Council's income. Following Covid-19, the Council had entered into a three-year agreement with SLM Everyone Active to reduce the management fee on a phased approach back to the contractual position. That agreement had run until the current year and Officers were working with Everyone Active to maximise the management fee returned to the Council.

The Contracts and Utilities Officer also reported that, following discussions with the Finance Team, the income levels being received from Everyone Active through the management fee were above the level included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan. It was therefore stated that there were no adverse financial implications on the Medium-Term Financial Plan from the current position.

Representatives from Everyone Active introduced the presentation (which is included in an addendum to these minutes to provide further context).

After consideration of the report and presentation, the Board provided the following points of discussion:

- If there were data available detailing regular attendees and if there was a maximum membership capacity? – Everyone Active advised that there was not a fixed maximum membership number but local demographic data and surveys were used. Since Covid-19 and with increased competition from other centres, increasing numbers was challenging. Everyone Active were looking at the potential to provide a 24-hour service. It was also explained that they looked at attendances, repeat visits and whether members were "multi-active" and it was noted that members who used multiple activities tended to have a longer length of stay. Everyone Active had introduced extra benefits for membership holders to encourage the retention of attendees.

- What would happen to the contract when BDC changed to a unitary authority? – In response Members were advised that discussions were being held with contract lawyers who was considering the position.
- Were there any funding opportunities such as Sports England or the Movement Fund? – The Board were advised that the Council had received Sports England Relief Fund to help with costs and capital funding which supported the installation of solar panels on the roof of the centre to help with carbon reduction. Members noted that Everyone Active and Officers were seeking other funding opportunities.
- A Member thanked Everyone Active for their presentation and praised the health and wellbeing schemes, in particular, the Escape Pain scheme which was welcomed by Officers.
- How were the spa facilities performing? – It was explained that the spa facilities formed part of the membership offer. It was also advised that Groupon spa days had shown a slight increase in figure attendance, however, figures showed that there had been a reduction of 10% attendance. The Committee were informed that efforts were being carried out with the PR Team through social media to encourage further interest. It was also explained that the spa had recently changed supplier and undergone a rebranding and retraining period, which may have contributed to the dip in usage. However, with staff adequately trained, a greater promotional push was expected. It was also stated that the spa remained a unique selling point because few gyms in the area offered spa facilities as part of a membership at a similar price. A Member suggested advertising in the Village Magazine, stating that it was popular locally and cheap to advertise in, which was noted by Officers.
- If there space availability at the Centre for racket sports? – In response Everyone Active responded that they were considering the potential for tennis courts and would be reviewing available capacity on the car park. Everyone Active worked with a company which funded the outlay, operated the courts and paid an agreed fee per court and the system operated whereby members could hire a racket from a vending machine. It was suggested by Everyone Active that this scheme could potentially be delivered at no extra cost to the Council.
- A Member raised the topic of parking permits and queried if users at the Centre had raised parking as a particular issue. The Member also referred to previous discussions with the Manager at the Centre suggesting a £40 annual parking permit to help with the cost of parking for users, however, it seemed that this suggestion had not been put into place. – In response Everyone Active expressed the view that parking charges, when added to the cost of membership, could significantly affect price competitiveness, especially compared with gyms where parking was free. It was also noted that the 30 minutes free parking did not help most gym users. The Contracts and Utilities Officer added that the Member’s suggestion was being reviewed, looking at daytime users to warrant the permit idea. A Member suggested that Everyone Active might approach the Council with a potential monthly cost for parking, stating that this might help with membership and competitiveness, although it might or might not be supported by the Council. – The Board were advised that such conversations had taken place and were

ongoing. The Chairman queried if the Centre had considered giving members a discount on parking charges. – It was advised that the car park was not operated by Everyone Active, however, the pricing of the car park had been reflected in the costings of the membership.

- The portfolio holder wished to thank Everyone Active for attending and emphasised that the partnership was vital and worked well. She also reminded the Board that tennis courts and pickle board were available at Sanders Park for residents' use.

RESOLVED that the Bromsgrove Sport and Leisure Centre report be noted.

(During consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed that included information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

11/26 **WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVE FOR 2026/27 AND UPDATE**

Councillor H.D.N. Warren-Clarke proposed that Councillor B. Kumar be appointed Chairman of the Board for the 2026/27 municipal year. This was seconded by Councillor A.M. Dale. Following a show of hands Councillor B. Kumar was nominated to become the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) for the municipal year 2026/27.

The HOSC representative also updated the Board following the latest meeting which had been held on 17th June 2026 in which the Committee received an update from NHS partners on the performance of Worcestershire's Urgent and Emergency Care (UEC) system and Patient Flow arrangement during the winter period October 2025 to March 2026.

The key points were highlighted as follows:

- Continued high demand on urgent and emergency care services.
- Improved patient flow remained critical to reducing hospital and ambulance delays.
- Greater use of Same Day Emergency Care, virtual wards and community services was helping avoid unnecessary admissions.
- Ongoing work was improving hospital discharge processes and reducing the length of stay.
- Better integration between NHS organisations and social care was supporting more efficient use of beds and resources.
- Further improvement was required to ensure resilience during future winter pressures.

- Whilst Worcestershire's health and care system had made measurable progress in managing patient flow and urgent care pressures, sustained partnership working and continued service transformation would be essential to meet growing healthcare demand in the years ahead.

After the update, Members made the following comments:

- Members queried whether measles had been mentioned as a cause for concern during HOSC meetings? – The HOSC representative advised that measles had not been mentioned specifically in the meeting, however, the Board were advised that measles was on the increase, with cross contamination from Birmingham into the Worcestershire District and outbreaks were on the rise.
- What health issues were likely to affect Bromsgrove residents for the forthcoming year? – Councillor B. Kumar replied that a key priority was preventing unnecessary attendance at Redditch of Worcester hospitals. The Board were advised of ongoing work to promote out-of-hours services at Princess of Wales Hospital, noting that travel to Redditch and Worcester could be costly and distressing for senior residents. It was also highlighted that there were positive developments through Healthy Worcestershire, including wellbeing centres and activities for senior citizens, such as fitness to prevent falls.

  Following the discussions concerning the Princess of Wales Hospital out-of-hours services, Members queried what the main obstacle was for this service? – The HOSC representative advised that the service still required nurses to link up with primary care, however, vital staff were not always available to cover the required shifts.

- Virtual and same day emergency care wards was raised with Members, commenting that many people shared concerns about virtual wards and suggested that where patients were well enough for a virtual ward, they might sometimes be well enough to be discharged with GP follow-up, while in other cases the support may not be strong enough. A Member expressed support for same-day emergency care as a way of taking pressure off hospitals and asked whether improvements had been seen. - Councillor Kumar responded that fit patients may receive assessment and treatment and go home the same day, however, many elderly patients had multiple ailments and could be too unfit to go home the same day.

RESOLVED that Councillor B. Kumar be appointed as the Council's representative on the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2026/27 municipal year and the update be noted.

12/26 FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - MEMBERSHIP REPORTS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members received a report requesting for the Chairman and Members to be appointed to the Finance and Budget Working Group for the 2026/27 municipal year.

It was reported by the Chairman that as per the terms of reference, the Working Group would comprise seven members which would include the Chairman of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee, once appointed and six Overview and Scrutiny Members.

It was advised that priority would be given to appointing Overview and Scrutiny Board members to the group, in line with the terms of reference but membership could be offered to other scrutiny pool members should there be any vacancies.

It was agreed by the Board that a meeting scheduled for the Finance and Budget Working Group, to be held the next day, prior to the Cabinet meeting, would not be sensible due to the short notice and limited Members of the working group.

Members that expressed an interest in joining the group during the Board meeting were Councillors J. Clarke, B. Kumar and P.M. McDonald.

RESOLVED that

a) Councillor P.M. McDonald be appointed as the Chairman of the Finance and Budget Working Group for the ensuing municipal year 2026/27;
b) Councillors J. Clarke and B. Kumar be appointed as Members of the Finance and Budget Scrutiny Working Group for the municipal year 2026/27;
c) Overview and Scrutiny Board Members not in attendance at this meeting of the Board to be contacted regarding their potential interest in being appointed as members of the Finance and Budget Working Group in 2026/27; and
d) The Terms of Reference for the Finance and Budget Working be approved.

13/26 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was presented for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the content of the Cabinet Work Programme be noted.

14/26 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme was considered by Members.

The Chairman stated that during the first heatwave, Worcestershire County Council had communicated that libraries could not be used as previously indicated. He therefore suggested and the Board agreed that a report be brought to the September meeting for scrutiny.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be noted as per the preamble above.

15/26 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTION SHEET**

The Overview and Scrutiny Action Sheet was considered by the Board.

RESOLVED that the Overview and Scrutiny Board Action sheet be noted.

16/26 **TO CONSIDER ANY URGENT BUSINESS, DETAILS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED TO THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR 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 for consideration.

17/26 **TO CONSIDER, AND IF CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE, TO PASS THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING DURING THE CONSIDERATION OF ITEM(S) OF BUSINESS CONTAINING EXEMPT INFORMATION:-**

RESOLVED: that under Section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of scheme 12A to the Act, as amended, the relevant paragraph of that part, in each case, being as set out below and that it is in the public interest to do so:-

Item No	Paragraph
18	3
19	3

18/26 **LEVELLING UP FUND PROGRAMME - QUARTERLY UPDATE**

The Assistant Director for Regeneration and Property updated the Board and provided a presentation on the levelling up fund for the Windsor

Street and Nailer's Yard projects (the details of this presentation are provided as an addendum to these minutes).

After consideration of the presentation, Members made the following comments:

Nailers Yard

- An update was requested on the remaining covenant agreements. – In response the Board were informed that of the two remaining covenant holders, one had reached an agreement in principle to release, however despite multiple attempts the other holder had not engaged. Members noted that the covenant agreement included the selling, storing and consuming of alcohol.
- Clarity where it details in the report that there was a shift in scheduling for the programme of external works. – It was clarified that the works related to the delays in respect of timescales to secure a required Section 278 agreement from Worcestershire County Council (WCC) for the public realm area surrounding the buildings. Members were assured that Officers were working closely with WCC to escalate the matter.
- What assurances could the Council expect that the levelling up assets would be protected under the new unitary authority? – The Executive Director was unable to provide assurances that the Council's assets would be protected, however, Members were advised that it would be advantageous, as a regular income would be generated for the Authority. It was also noted that there are grant conditions that would prevent a future unitary authority from disposing of the buildings for a certain number of years.

RESOLVED that the update on the progress of the Levelling Up Fund projects be noted.

(During consideration of this item, Members discussed matters that necessitated the disclosure of exempt information. It was therefore agreed to move to exclude the press and public prior to any debate on the grounds that information would be revealed that included information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

19/26 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 14TH APRIL AND 16TH JUNE 2026**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 14th April and 16th June 2026 were considered.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 14th April and 16th June 2026 be agreed as a true and correct record.

The meeting closed at 8.40 p.m.

Chairman