

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL
MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE

11TH JUNE 2026, AT 6.00 P.M.

PARKSIDE COMMITTEE - PARKSIDE

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

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

1/26

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2026/27 MUNICIPAL YEAR

As this was the first meeting of the municipal year the Electoral Services Manger asked for nominations for Chairman. Councillor S.M. Evans was proposed by Councillor K.J. May and seconded by Councillor E.M.S Gray.

There being no further nominations, it was

RESOLVED that Councillor S.M. Evans be appointed Chairman for the 2026/27 Municipal year.

2/26

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE 2026/27 MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Chairman requested nominations for the position of Vice Chairman for the 2026/27 municipal year. Councillor C. Hotham was nominated by Councillor S.M. Evans and seconded by Councillor J. Robinson.

There being no further nominations, it was

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

3/26

TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies for absence.

4/26

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S.J. Baxter declared that she was the current Vice-Chair of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

Councillor S.M. Evans declared a disclosable interest in respect of Item No. 7/26: Community Governance Review - Finstall Parish in respect of his role as County Councillor for that area.

5/26

TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ELECTORAL MATTERS COMMITTEE HELD ON 19TH JANUARY 2026

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th January 2026 were submitted for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19th January 2026 be approved as a correct record.

6/26

ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORKING GROUP TO CONSIDER FUTURE LOCAL GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Senior Electoral Services Officer introduced the report on the establishment of a cross-party working group to consider local governance arrangements within Bromsgrove District Council.

The report had come to the Electoral Matter Committee via a resolution made at the Annual Council meeting held on 20th May 2026 in relation to future local governance arrangements within Bromsgrove District. The District Council was expected to be replaced by a new unitary authority in 2028. This meant that the current district tier of local representation and service delivery would no longer exist in its present form. It had been noted that a need to consider how local governance should operate for communities across Bromsgrove in the future had been created by this.

It had been decided that a working group be set up to look at options available by doing some preparatory work on issues that mattered to residents and stakeholders and in addition whether there was a case to progress with more formal routes such as community governance reviews (CGRs).

It was explained that the working group would undertake an engagement exercise over part of the summer and then report back to the Electoral Matters Committee with its findings.

Members were given a list of items on which the working group could include in its preparatory work. These were:

- 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 might operate in the context of Local Government Reorganisation
- Consider the broad financial and resource implications of any potential options

Members of the Committee were given an indicative timetable of the working group's business which would cumulate in its findings coming to the Electoral Matters Committee in late September 2026 and recommendations going to Council in October.

The Senior Electoral Services Officer also informed Members about the appointment of charter trustees which had been discussed at the Electoral Matters Committee meeting held in November 2025. It was explained that until formal resolutions regarding local governance were decided upon, charter trustees provided a mechanism for safeguarding civic regalia such as the Chairman's chain and other historic items.

It was noted that charter trustees were usually Councillors of the successor authority however if, as a result of a CGR a parish/town council was created, the charter trustees would be dissolved and the regalia put into the care of that council.

The Chairman then opened up the item for debate and Members asked about timetabling for a CGR and what areas a CGR would cover. It was explained that the engagement exercise would inform the necessity of a CGR and scope of any review due to be commenced. The exercise would need to make it clear that the purpose was to establish what residents would like future local governance to look like. In terms of a timetable, it was noted that CGRs were usually completed within 12 months which would mean the shadow authority would have input to any decision made.

There was a short debate on the number of returns that would come from the engagement process, and it was noted that in general they

were often very small but further noted that with sufficient promotion at least everyone involved would be given the chance to comment.

Members asked questions on the number of charter trustees and if they could be limited. It was explained that the trustees would be Councillors that would cover the unparished areas.

There was a general discussion regarding the appointment and funding of neighbourhood area committees, and it was confirmed that these would comprise a membership of unitary councillors and that the unitary authority would decide on funding for each committee.

There was more discussion on the appetite for parish councils particularly when it came to paying a precept to the parish council. It was hoped that any engagement would cover this.

The cost of the engagement was queried, and it was noted that the working group engagement would be kept within existing budgets. However, if as a result of the engagement CGRs were required, a budget would need to be assessed and assigned to the review.

After summing up, it was decided to create a cross-party working group with the first meeting of that group to be held at the close of that Committee meeting and the timetable to be based on the indicative proposed timetable. Members also decided to recommend to Council a proposal that Charter Trustees be included in any requests to be added to the Structural Changes Order.

The three recommendations within the report were proposed by Councillor J. Robinson and seconded by Councillor S.J. Baxter.

All Members were in agreement, and it was therefore:

RESOLVED 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 be approved as the basis for the working group's preparatory work; and

RECOMMENDED that

- 3) A request to Council be made to ask 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 was to be in place for the Bromsgrove area on the reorganisation date.

7/26

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - FINSTALL PARISH

The Electoral Services Manager presented the report concerning the ongoing work regarding the CGR of Fininstall Parish and highlighted the following:

- The consultation ran from 16th February to 17th April 2026, and all electors were sent a letter directing them to the review webpage and informing them about how they could respond.
- At the close of the consultation there had been 49 replies.
- It was noted that 80% of responders claimed to be directly affected by the proposals.
- Over two thirds of responders agreed with moving, Field View House, the area west of the railway line, out of the parish.
- A majority of respondents (60%) disagreed with the proposal of moving the unparished area east of the railway line into the Parish of Fininstall. Common concerns raised regarding this were the perceived lack of benefits and the potential impact on the parish especially its increase in size.
- The second consultation was due to run from 15th June until 1st October 2026.

The Chairman then opened up the report for general discussion. Members discussed the comments provided in consultation feedback, paying close attention to remarks on the size of the Parish, that the area under review was very different to Fininstall Parish and the fact that some thought they were in the Aston Fields area.

In regard to Field View House, the number of electors affected was confirmed and it was noted that it would be a small area that would move from a parished to unparished area and if electors would appreciate what this change would mean. It was questioned whether this change should be considered after the local governance engagement from the previous item had been completed.

The Chairman asked the three members of Fininstall Parish Council who were in the public gallery if they wished to speak and they chose to do

so. They noted the results of the consultation and that it seemed to point to a broad agreement to move Field View House out of the Parish but not to include the unparished area east of the railway line.

Committee members took these comments into account and again discussed the wider engagement exercise that would be soon commencing and whether this would confuse electors, especially since a major part of the consultation would involve unparished areas of Bromsgrove town.

After considering the options available, the Committee decided an alternative proposal, to defer Draft Recommendations and the second consultation on the Finstall Parish Review until after the local governance engagement exercise had been completed.

This was proposed by Councillor C.A. Hotham and seconded by Councillor S.J. Baxter.

All Members were in agreement, and it was therefore:

RESOLVED that

- 1) Draft Recommendations on the Finstall Parish Review be deferred until after the local governance engagement exercise was completed; and
- 2) The Assistant Director for Legal, Democratic and Procurement Services, following consultation with the Chairman, should make amendments to the review timetable to enable Resolution 1 above to be implemented.

8/26

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

There was no urgent business to consider on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 6.54 p.m.

Chairman