

Portfolio Holder Report

Portfolio Holder Report – Finance

Introduction and Overview:

At Bromsgrove District Council Portfolio Holders provide an annual update to Council on services within their portfolio remit. These services are delivered in accordance with the Council's Priorities, as detailed in the Bromsgrove District Council Plan 2024 - 2027.

This report provides an outline of services and activities within the remit of this particular Portfolio Holder. Information is included in relation to the Council's Priorities, relevant key activities, partnership working, projects and programmes and news stories.

Whilst services will be contributing information into this report it is worth noting that not all sections of the report will be relevant to all service areas. In this circumstance, some sections may not be completed by all services.

The report will be structured as follows:

- 1) Update on Organisational Priorities, key activities and next steps
- 2) Organisational priorities related to partnership working, key activities and next steps
- 3) Good news stories

The Council has the following Priorities:

Council Priorities	Organisational priorities
Economic Development	Financial stability
Housing	Sustainability
Environment	Partnerships
Infrastructure	Organisational Culture – the 4Ps
	Budget & Resources



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1. Update on Council Priorities

Work within the Finance Portfolio directly supports several organisational priorities, several of which overlap or have common dependencies. During this reporting period, significant progress has been made in several areas.

Financial Stability / Sustainability / Budget and Resources:

The Council is taking a coordinated approach to strengthening its financial resilience. This brings together development of the Medium Term Financial Plan, a comprehensive review of spending and income, and improvements to the systems, controls, workforce and governance arrangements that support effective financial management. It is therefore broader than a budget-management or savings exercise and is intended to provide a more sustainable financial foundation for the Council. While the underlying structural work is progressing well, the recovery process remains subject to significant legacy pressures, system complexities, and ongoing oversight from our external auditors.

This work is particularly important within a challenging and uncertain national environment for local government. The Spending Review provides an opportunity to consider how resources can be used most effectively in support of local priorities, including where costs can be reduced, income strengthened and services delivered differently. Proposals will be developed with regard to statutory responsibilities and their potential effects on residents, communities, services and the workforce, and will only be brought forward following appropriate evidence, challenge and impact assessment.

By addressing immediate financial pressures while strengthening the Council's underlying capacity and controls, the programme will support informed Member decisions, help protect priority services and place the Council in a better position to respond to future change.

As part of the programme, the Council continues to address the governance and financial management improvements identified through the Annual Governance Statement. Material progress has been made, although some complex areas require further work and sustained management attention. Detailed monitoring and assurance will continue through the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee, while the Finance and Budget Working Group provides Member scrutiny of the developing budget and spending review.

Organisational Culture – the 4Ps:

The Portfolio continues to support organisational development through investment in workforce resilience, succession planning and strengthening

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professional standards across Finance. Work is underway to review structures, update role profiles and improve process documentation to reduce reliance on individual officers and improve business continuity.

Key activities since last report:

- Development of the 2027/28 Medium Term Financial Plan and Spending Review framework.
- Creation of a Finance Resilience Programme across capital, treasury management, budget management, annual closedown processes, financial systems, workforce resilience, VAT procedures and risk management.
- A revised Opportunity and Risk Management Strategy has been drafted and discussed with Member Risk Champions.
- Permanent recruitment into key Finance roles has progressed, including appointments to Finance Business Partner posts.

Anticipated Activities/Key Milestones For Next Period

The coming period will focus on turning initial review work (which has been substantial) into clear and deliverable options. Members will continue to be involved through the appropriate stages of scrutiny, consultation and decision-making. This measured approach is intended to support transparent choices, protect financial resilience and ensure that changes are considered in the context of their practical consequences for services and communities. Some key milestones include:

- Completion of the first phase of the Spending Review, development of budget proposals and Member and public engagement ahead of the approval of the 2027/28 budget and Medium Term Financial Plan in February 2027.
- Further work to strengthen treasury management, capital planning and financial reporting arrangements ahead of the approval of a revised Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Strategy in February 2027.
- Improved annual closedown procedures to strengthen the quality, timeliness and audit readiness of the Council's accounts.
- Launch of the revised Opportunity and Risk Management Strategy.
- Implementation of workforce resilience initiatives.

2. Partnership Working:

The Council works with a range of partner organisations to meet the needs of residents and businesses in the District. The following section details work delivered within the remit of this Portfolio Holder.

Financial Governance and Assurance Partnerships:

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Effective financial planning and improvement depend upon constructive working across the organisation and with the Council's professional advisers and assurance providers. Services are contributing operational knowledge and evidence to the Spending Review, supported by Finance, Legal, Human Resources, Procurement, ICT, Property and Performance colleagues. The Council also continues to engage with Internal Audit, External Audit, treasury and taxation advisers and transformation support, providing additional expertise, challenge and assurance as the programme develops.

Key activities since last report:

- Commenced a comprehensive review of treasury management arrangements, working with the Council's treasury advisers as appropriate.
- Continued engagement with External Audit in relation to audit readiness, accounts production and financial assurance improvements as part of the closedown improvement programme.
- Worked collaboratively across services and the Corporate Leadership Team to support development of Spending Review proposals and the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Anticipated Activities/Key Milestones and Priorities For Next Period

- Continued and regularised engagement with External Audit on accounts production, audit readiness and financial assurance.
- Ongoing work with treasury and taxation advisers on the specialist elements of the improvement programme.
- Cross-service development and challenge of Spending Review opportunities, including assessment of financial, legal, workforce, procurement, property, technology and service implications.

3. Good News Stories**Financial Resilience Programme:**

Good progress has been made in establishing a joined-up and transparent programme of financial improvement.

Positive work has taken place to help ensure a better integrated approach to financial management that includes greater oversight through the work of a formal senior leadership team arrangement based on the "Golden Triangle", as recommended by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and



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Accountancy (CIPFA) consisting of Head of Paid Service, Executive Director of Finance /Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

The Budget Review and Spending Review are underway, permanent recruitment is strengthening the Finance service (including the successful recruitment of an Executive Director for Finance from April 2026), and more robust arrangements are being developed for accounts closedown, opportunity and risk management, financial systems and process documentation. These are substantial programmes rather than quick fixes, but together they demonstrate clear progress towards stronger, more resilient and sustainable financial arrangements.