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

15TH SEPTEMBER 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 (as substitute), 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 K. Taylor - Cabinet Member for Local Government Reorganisation, WRS and Climate Change
Councillor P.J. Whittaker – Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Community Safety
Councillor J. Robinson

Officers: Mr J. Walton, Ms R. Egan, Mr R. Elmes, Mr S. Parry, Mr M. Austin, Ms R. Milward, Mr D. Riley, Ms M. Worsfold, Mr J. Carradine and Mrs S. Woodfield

Other parties: Ms R. Perrott and Ms C. Browne (Representatives of Warwickshire County Council)

20/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NAMED SUBSTITUTES

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

Apologies were also received from Councillor S.A. Webb as portfolio holder for Health and Wellbeing, Leisure and Culture.

21/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor S. Robinson declared, for transparency, that the Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Cabinet Member for Environment and Communities, who was attending in connection with the Libraries Unlocked item, was her husband.

No other declarations of interest or whipping arrangements were declared.

22/26 **LIBRARIES "UNLOCKED" UPDATE**

Representatives of WCC presented an update on the implementation and impact of Libraries Unlocked across Worcestershire, with particular attention given to Bromsgrove and Rubery libraries.

The Board was advised that Libraries Unlocked was operating at 11 locations. A further implementation at Woodrush Library was being progressed, subject to lease negotiations with the Black Pear Trust. This was expected to be the final site in the current programme. Across the service, Libraries Unlocked had more than 21,000 registered members and more than 14,000 active users. Since the programme began in 2022, more than 8,700 hours of community led activity had taken place in participating libraries.

Across the 11 sites, total library opening hours had increased by 59 per cent, while staffed opening hours had reduced by 31 per cent. Libraries Unlocked had not been progressed at Alvechurch because of prohibitive Private Finance Initiative (PFI) related capital and revenue costs, or at Hagley because increased building costs had reduced the projected return on investment.

Bromsgrove and Rubery libraries had joined the scheme in early 2024. Both were reported to have healthy levels of visits, book issues, computer use and community led activity, although neither had extensive meeting room facilities.

The total capital investment across the 11 sites was reported as approximately £580,000, with staffing savings of just over £300,000. Approximately £33,500 had been deducted from gross savings to account for additional utility costs. At Rubery, this amounted to approximately £4,000. At Bromsgrove Library, utility costs had not been separately apportioned because the library formed part of the Parkside building and there was no mechanism for separately monitoring the library's consumption. Property Services would investigate whether utility expenditure at Parkside had noticeably increased following implementation in March and April 2024.

Customer feedback indicated that barriers to joining included insufficient information, the requirement to attend a face-to-face induction, access to toilets, safety concerns and a desire for Sunday opening. In response, information sessions had been introduced, toilets had been made available at some locations and library managers were sharing good practice on community engagement. Officers were considering a trial of online registration, while recognising the safeguarding and health and safety value of the existing face to face induction. A communications

campaign highlighting the safety of Libraries Unlocked was also planned.

A survey undertaken to inform the refreshed library strategy had ranked Libraries Unlocked as the third library service most useful to families, after books and the provision of welcoming community space.

Eligibility had been extended to people aged 15 and over so that pupils in Years 10 and 11 could access libraries during examination preparation. Local library teams were working with schools and attending community events, while central social media campaigns promoted libraries as quiet study spaces offering study and wellbeing support.

After the presentation, Members queries and officer feedback were discussed which included:

- How was an “active” user defined? - Officers explained that this was defined as a unique individual who had used Libraries Unlocked during the relevant reporting period. Entry was recorded when the person used their library card to access the building. Wider library use was also assessed through borrowing and computer use data, supplemented periodically by exit surveys to estimate activity that could not be captured electronically.
- A further question clarified that “issues” within the performance information meant book issues.
- Members expressed concern that the information did not provide a sufficiently clear comparison with library use before the introduction of Libraries Unlocked. Without baseline data, it was difficult to judge whether the programme had succeeded. - Officers accepted this point and agreed that comparative information could be provided. Experience elsewhere had shown that visits often declined following the introduction of an open library model before recovering over subsequent years. Across the seven phase two libraries, including Bromsgrove and Rubery, visits had initially been 8 per cent below the pre implementation level. The latest monitoring showed that the gap had reduced to approximately 4.4 per cent. Local library managers were preparing audience development plans using data to identify groups that were not using the service which included work with schools to increase participation by older teenagers. Officers offered to provide further information about the local audience development plans for Bromsgrove and Rubery.
- Members asked why Bromsgrove and Rubery showed different conversion rates between registered and active members. - Officers were unable to provide an immediate explanation and agreed to investigate.
- Members also asked about the difference between gross and net staffing savings at the two libraries. - Officers explained that Bromsgrove was a larger library with more staff covering its

opening hours. A reduction in staffed hours therefore produced greater staffing savings than at the smaller Rubery Library.

- Members expressed the view that a face-to-face induction could prevent working residents from registering. - Officers acknowledged that the Council might have been overly cautious and confirmed that they were open to trialling online registration. This could potentially use a QR code and an online safety video. The face-to-face process had originally been retained to address safeguarding and health and safety concerns. Officers considered that experience gained since 2022 meant the authority could now assess alternative arrangements more confidently.
- A Member emphasised that any online process must retain stringent identity verification. - Officers confirmed that an individual had to be a library member before becoming a Libraries Unlocked member and that ordinary library registration currently included identity checks. The WCC Cabinet Member added that Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) operated during unstaffed opening hours and staff at Rubery had reported no particular safety concerns.
- The Chairman questioned whether, after two years, use remained significantly below previous levels. - Officers clarified that use was approximately 4 per cent below the earlier figure and was moving in the right direction, suggesting that additional promotional work could assist.
- A Member expressed the view that there seemed to be national decline for in-person use of libraries. - Members noted that increased online activity and changed patterns of borrowing, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, could also have influenced physical library visits. The WCC Cabinet Member encouraged Members and community organisations to promote their local libraries and make use of library space, helping to sustain the service.

RESOLVED that the libraries “Unlocked” Update was noted.

23/26 **LOCAL HERITAGE ACTION LIST - QUARTERLY UPDATE**

The Principal Conservation Officer updated the Board on the development of the Local Heritage List.

Lists had already been adopted for Alvechurch, Beoley, Belbroughton with Fairfield, and Dodford with Grafton. Draft lists had been prepared for Bromsgrove, Bournheath, Catshill and North Marlbrook, and Wythall. Work was continuing for Lickey and Blackwell and Bentley Pauncefoot and had commenced or was about to commence for Clent and Hagley.

The draft lists for Bromsgrove, Bournheath, Catshill and North Marlbrook, and Wythall were ready to proceed to formal consultation. Letters were expected to be issued to property owners, parish councils, ward councillors and other interested bodies. Consultation was expected

to begin on 28 September 2026 and continue until the end of the first week of November 2026.

Consultation events would enable residents to discuss the proposals with conservation officers. Further sites could be nominated during the consultation. Following consultation, officers would review the representations, amend the lists where appropriate and prepare a consultation summary. The amended lists would then be reported to Cabinet, with adoption anticipated in the new year.

Following the update, Members asked why nationally listed buildings did not appear on the Local Heritage List. The Principal Conservation Officer explained that the local and national lists were separate. National listing was determined by the Secretary of State on advice from Historic England. Whereas statutorily listed buildings could not be placed on the Local Heritage List because they already had a higher degree of protection. Locally listed buildings would not receive statutory listed building protection but would remain non designated heritage assets and would be a material consideration in the planning process. It was also confirmed that ordinary planning requirements would continue to apply.

Members asked when the work would be completed across the district. Members were advised that the project was detailed and resource intensive and was approaching the halfway point. No firm completion date could be given because progress depended upon workloads and the requirement to respond to planning applications within statutory deadlines.

Members noted that the four lists currently approaching consultation had taken more than a year to prepare and expressed concern that completion across the district could take too long. In response it was explained that staff changes and a period without a second conservation officer had affected continuity, however, members were advised that a consultant continued to provide support.

Members suggested that an alternative plan was needed, including an assessment of the hours and resources required to complete the project. Members emphasised that the local list should be progressed promptly because of the scale of anticipated development.

The Portfolio Holder agreed that the total work should be estimated and divided into manageable phases so that the case for additional resources could be considered, while acknowledging that the number of potential heritage assets in each area could not be known until detailed work began.

RESOLVED that the Local Heritage Action List – Quarterly Update be noted.

24/26 **FOOD WASTE IMPLEMENTATION**

The Environmental Services Manager presented an extensive update on the introduction of household food waste collections.

The Environment Act 2021 and the simpler recycling reforms required councils to standardise recycling arrangements, reduce landfill and lower waste related carbon emissions. Separate household food waste collections had become a statutory responsibility from 31 March 2026. Approximately one quarter of English authorities had not implemented a service by that date.

Although Government had provided capital funding for vehicles and food caddies, anticipated ongoing revenue funding had not materialised as a distinct additional allocation. The funding had instead been incorporated into the general settlement without an increase equivalent to the operating cost of the service. This had significantly affected planning.

Neither the Bromsgrove nor Redditch depot had sufficient capacity for the additional vehicles and staff. An initial joint outsourcing procurement with Redditch Borough Council and Wyre Forest District Council had not proceeded after Wyre Forest withdrew following the Government's revenue funding decision. The scale of this change meant the original contract could not be awarded under procurement rules.

The service was therefore being developed in-house using leased operational land. Vehicles had been ordered, recruitment had commenced, caddies were expected during October 2026 and vehicles were expected in December 2026. A phased collection rollout was planned from late January or early February 2027.

It was explained that each household would receive a small kitchen caddy, liners and a lockable 27 litre kerbside caddy. Waste composition analysis undertaken in 2022 suggested that food represented approximately 35 per cent by weight of the average residual waste bin in Bromsgrove.

Collected material would be taken to an anaerobic digestion facility near Kinver and Stourton. The process would produce biogas for energy and digestate for use as a low grade agricultural fertiliser. Because no suitable bulking point was available within Worcestershire, collection vehicles would need to travel to the facility to unload.

Existing funding was sufficient to provide the service to approximately 55 to 60 per cent of Bromsgrove households. Subject to an additional budget allocation of approximately £190,000, remaining households would be added through a second phased rollout. Full statutory compliance was anticipated by October 2027.

Member queries and Officer responses were advised as:

- Members asked how collection rounds would be stress-tested. – The Environmental Services Manager explained that route optimisation software would model collection and journey times using existing data.
- To explain how routine collections would be carried out. – In response it was explained that food waste collection days would mirror residents' existing collection days where possible. The phased rollout would allow issues to be addressed before each subsequent round began.
- To advise on training methods for new recruits. - New employees would receive route and local area training, spend time on existing collection services and help deliver the caddies so that they became familiar with the collection areas.
- Members stressed that effective behaviour change was essential. – It was explained that each caddy would be accompanied by an information pack explaining how to use the service and what happened to the collected material. Initial areas would be selected partly on the basis of existing participation in recycling and garden waste services.
- How was the Council engaging with residents? - Communications would include social media, messages on refuse vehicles, pre and post launch resident research and potentially case studies following households during the rollout. A vacant post was also being repurposed as a Waste Education and Engagement Officer.
- Members also queried how the scheme was being funded. – It was explained that government funding had been received for the initial communications programme. Additional funding from extended producer responsibility arrangements had been allocated for wider recycling messages for the following two years. The Waste Education and Engagement Officer post was being created by repurposing an existing vacancy.
- Members suggested that engagement should be provided at schools as children had the potential to influence household participation.
- Members raised concerns of caddy visibility. – It was confirmed that residents would be advised to place caddies out early. Where a container was not presented when the crew attended, opportunities to return would be limited by the route and the requirement to travel to the disposal facility. The kerbside caddies would be a lighter grey to improve visibility. Crews were expected to use larger "slave bins" while walking along streets, which should help them identify caddies at individual properties. Missed collections would be monitored to identify patterns. Replacement caddies would initially be provided without charge.
- If it would be a universal or opt in service? – It was clarified that the service would not be opt in. Legislation required the Council to provide the service to every household. Caddies would therefore be delivered universally and collection vehicles would cover every residential road on a weekly basis.

- Would the Council provide individual identification for caddies? – Officers informed members that residents could add their own address labels to caddies. The Council would not apply individual numbering. However, instructions on what waste should go into the caddy were provided.
- The Leader queried whether WCC would contribute to the transport cost of taking material outside the Worcestershire area. - Officers advised that no contribution had yet been agreed, but discussions about a possible haulage payment were continuing.
- Queries were raised on the leasing of collection sites. – It was explained that the collection sites were being leased under a five year arrangement with a three year break clause. However, purchase had not been pursued because of implementation timescales and uncertainty created by LGR.
- Members questioned whether service resources were based on optimistic participation assumptions. - Officers explained that route mileage and the need to pass every household were the principal resource drivers. The journey time would not reduce significantly if fewer residents participated. Actual operating experience could nevertheless identify efficiencies that might support future savings or wider waste services.
- Members queried the carbon assessment and saving benefits. – It was explained that the carbon assessment represented the net benefit of diverting food waste from the existing energy from waste process to anaerobic digestion and included the effects of vehicles and fuel. The saving was comparatively modest because residual waste was already used to generate energy rather than being sent to landfill.
- Would there be any financial value to the Council from energy produced by the anaerobic digestion methodology? – In response the Board were advised that once waste was collected, responsibility transferred to WCC as disposal authority. Any financial value from energy or digestate would therefore sit within WCC disposal arrangements and was expected principally to reduce disposal costs.
- If caddy liners were supplied to residents? – In response the Board were advised that an initial supply of liners would be issued to households. Residents requiring replacements would tie a liner around the caddy handle, signalling to the crew that a new roll should be left. This would avoid separate delivery journeys and ensure replacement liners were focused on participating households.
- Containment of food within the caddies was also raised and also concerns of harmful contaminants to the environment. – Members were advised that the kerbside caddies would have lockable handles to reduce access by animals. At the digestion facility, material would be shredded and screened to remove contaminants. The facility already processed significant commercial food waste and had several tanks, providing operational resilience. An alternative facility in Gloucestershire could potentially be used if required, although haulage and

contingency arrangements needed further development with WCC.

- Why plastic liners had been chosen and not biodegradable? - Plastic liners had been selected because biodegradable liners could begin to break down on contact with moisture and interfere with processing. The anaerobic digestion operator preferred plastic liners because its shredding and separation system could remove them to a high standard. Officers agreed to seek further information about the residual risk from microplastics.
- Had Officers considered utilising experience from other Local Authorities' successful roll outs? - Officers had considered experience from Stratford-on-Avon, Slough, Cambridgeshire, Newcastle, Malvern Hills and other councils, together with guidance from the Waste and Resources Action Programme. Members suggested that experience in Sussex should also be examined.
- If Central Government set the annual revenue costs and was there a risk to the Council if the funding was not utilised? – In response Officers confirmed that the government did not set the revenue costs, however, capital costs were set by Central Government.

RESOLVED that the Food Waste Implementation update be noted.

25/26 **COUNCIL TAX PAYMENTS**

The Revenue Services Manager presented the findings of an investigation into direct debits due on 15th August 2026 being collected on 14th August rather than 17th August.

The Council offered payment dates on the 1st, 15th, 21st and 28th of each month. When the due date fell on a non-processing day, staff had to amend the processing date manually. The officer processing the file had applied the rule used for outgoing payments, which were brought forward, rather than the rule for collections, which should be moved to the next processing day.

Contributing factors included insufficiently clear procedural guidance, failure of the post submission review, unused system validation controls and temporary staffing pressure caused by annual leave and long-term absence within a small team.

Approximately 5,500 customers were affected. Fewer than five complaints had been received and one reimbursement of less than £2 had been made. Although the actual impact was limited, officers recognised the potential seriousness.

Immediate action included briefing staff, reinforcing the checking process and clarifying guidance for non-processing days. Longer term work would strengthen procedure guides and investigate integration or

automation between Civica and AccessPay, reducing manual intervention.

After the presentation Members queries and officer responses were as follows:

- What was the root cause of the problem? - Officers confirmed that the incident involved human error, but that weaknesses in procedures and controls contributed. Three principal direct debit risks were identified which included collecting too early, failing to collect and transmitting a file twice.
- What future preventative controls had been put in place? - Control totals and post submission checks were intended to prevent these errors but the post submission check had failed partly because previous reliability had created complacency. A senior officer would oversee checks during the following months.
- Could Application Interface (AI) or automation be used? – Officers advised that AccessPay offered interfaces capable of extracting files directly from the core system. Feasibility, costs and any necessary business case would be assessed.
- Would regular future reconciliations/audit trails be carried out? – The Director of Finance confirmed that future assurance reporting could include this issue and that a report could be brought to the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee.
- Members welcomed the transparent “learning from errors and failure” simplistic approach and asked how widely it was used. - Officers explained that it was a Revenues Service framework rather than a corporate framework. It was designed to identify underlying causes instead of attributing every error solely to an individual.
- Had other manual interventions across the wider service had been reviewed? – In response the Board were informed that no additional service wide review had yet been undertaken, although annual audits examined specific processes and controls.

RESOLVED that

1) The findings of the investigation into the early collection of direct debit payments; and
2) The actions to be taken to improve the collection process, as outlined in the investigation findings are noted.

26/26 **DRAFT BROMSGROVE CAR PARKS STRATEGY**

Officers presented the draft Bromsgrove Car Parking Strategy for early scrutiny before Cabinet consideration.

Evidence suggested that the town centre had sufficient overall parking capacity, including after the future loss of the Stourbridge Road car park. Demand was, however, concentrated in central car parks. Parkside was

used predominantly by season ticket holders rather than Council employees.

The proposed objectives included supporting regeneration and economic growth, improving customer experience, optimising use of the parking estate, supporting sustainable and low emission travel, improving management and enforcement and ensuring the network's long term financial sustainability.

Potential actions included clearer signage, redistribution of season ticket holders, regular utilisation monitoring, reviews of parking in local centres, a visible enforcement improvement plan, assessment of slower electric vehicle charging and possible use of the National Parking Platform.

Comments and officer responses are provided below:

- Members suggested signage on the approaches to the town centre identifying the most suitable car park for particular destinations. - Officers agreed to consider this to encourage the use of car parks less utilised.
- A typographical error was outlined within the report. - Officers confirmed that this would be reviewed and amended as necessary.
- Questions were raised about discrepancies in capacity figures and whether the evidence distinguished between peak occupancy in individual car parks and peak occupancy across the whole network. - Officers agreed that the figures and explanation required checking and clarification.
- Members supported moving season ticket holders towards less heavily used outer car parks and also queried whether North Bromsgrove and School Drive could be connected or expanded using adjoining land. – In response it was confirmed that this was being reviewed as a possibility, although full costs were not yet available.
- Accessibility issues were raised, including the use of disabled spaces and payment machines. - Officers advised that all Council car parks retained cash payment facilities and agreed to examine accessibility in greater depth.
- Members expressed concern that the surveys represented only point in time manual counts rather than comprehensive beat surveys. – The Board were advised that no registration based, half hourly surveys had been undertaken and that more detailed work would require additional resources or commissioning.
- Members argued that forecasting needed to reflect housing growth and the Nailers Yard development, town centre residential development, free parking arrangements and other future demand before any irreversible decision was made about Churchfields. - Officers advised that Recreation Road South had been observed at below 50 per cent occupancy and that up to approximately 70 cars might be associated with the Nailers Yard commercial building, in addition to visitors.

- Members stressed that parking pressures in local centres, including Aston Fields, Hagley, Barnt Green and Alvechurch, could be more severe than in Bromsgrove town centre. - Officers advised that strategic responsibility for parking had transferred to the Towns and Local Centres Strategic Lead, who would examine these issues.
- An update was requested on the extra resource suggested by the Board for enforcement officers. – In response Members were advised that the Council had funded 1.5 additional full-time equivalent civil enforcement posts. One full-time officer had been recruited however the half-time post had proved difficult to fill. Further recruitment and use of overtime were being pursued. Members suggested considering whether available underspends could fund a full post.

During consideration of this matter the Chairman concluded discussions and confirmed the Board's feedback to Cabinet should include the need for the following:

- Stronger and clearer evidence.
- Robust forecasting of future demand.
- Improved signage.
- Consideration of accessibility.
- Examination of parking pressures outside the town centre.
- Improved enforcement capacity.
- Caution before making decisions affecting Churchfields car park.

Also during consideration of this item the following recommendation was also proposed by Councillor B. Kumar and seconded by Councillor S.A. Robinson:

"Whether a task group should be established to examine district-wide parking requirements".

On being put to the vote the recommendation was carried.

RECOMMENDED that:

Following consideration of the draft Bromsgrove Car Parking Strategy 2026-2029 the Board's feedback to help shape the final version prior to Cabinet consideration would include the need for the following:

- Stronger and clearer evidence.
- Robust forecasting of future demand.
- Improved signage.
- Consideration of accessibility.
- Examination of parking pressures outside the town centre.
- Improved enforcement capacity.

- Caution before making decisions affecting Churchfields car park; and

RESOLVED that a scrutiny task group be established to investigate parking requirements district-wide.

27/26 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION (LGR) UPDATE**

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

Earlier in the month, Government announced a pause to the LGR process, including in Worcestershire, whilst it reviewed July 2026 decisions on future unitary authority structures. The July decision has not been withdrawn, but implementation activity has been paused pending the outcome of that review.

Worcestershire remained within scope of the review and LGR and devolution continue to be part of Government policy. However, there was limited clarity on the review's full scope, timetable or eventual outcome. As a result, Worcestershire councils have moved into a preparation and readiness phase. Work linked to any specific future model had been halted.

There was currently no Structural Changes Order in place and no legislation to implement any new council structure. So, it remained unclear what any future proposal would involve.

In light of Government guidance, Bromsgrove had adopted a cautious approach to financial expenditure. Most implementation activity had been paused, including planned spend in some core areas.

Some limited expenditure would continue to maintain critical programme capability, including shared programme management arrangements via the Programme Director but only where it provided value irrespective of the eventual LGR outcome and represented an appropriate use of public funds.

Whilst most implementation activity had paused, disaggregation data and analysis activities would continue within the County Council and readiness work would continue within all councils where each council determined it was beneficial and represented value for money.

Decisions on any shared activity funded through the LGR Implementation Reserve fund would continue to be taken through the agreed countywide governance arrangements.

The current expectation was that any May 2027 local elections would proceed on existing council boundaries, however, longer-term

governance arrangements would remain subject to future Government decisions and any associated legislation.

The approach being taken by the LGR Implementation Board was that the Board would be asked to adopt the following principle at their next meeting "Would any work still be useful under any future LGR outcome, or if LGR did not proceed?" If yes, it should continue; if aligned to a specific LGR model, it is paused.

Examples of work that could continue during the pause, if approved were as follows:

- Workforce data, structures, contracts and HR records.
- Asset information, registers, compliance and property records.
- Contract inventories, financial analysis and readiness planning.
- Data quality, systems mapping, governance and technology risk.
- Service improvement, productivity, resilience and organisational effectiveness.

The Board was advised that further updates would be provided as the position developed.

The Leader asked whether the Council could access the £900,000 reportedly allocated per unitary authority to recoup transitional expenditure already incurred. Officers were unable to provide an immediate answer and undertook to investigate further.

Members emphasised that continuing uncertainty created further costs and that the Council should seek to recover expenditure wherever possible.

The Portfolio Holder also wished to place on record his thanks to the officer previously leading the work and wished her well during maternity leave.

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

28/26 **WORCESTERSHIRE HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - UPDATE**

The HOSC representative Councillor B. Kumar updated the Board following the latest meeting which was held on 21st July 2026 covering adult mental health rehabilitation and end of life care.

The redesign of adult mental health rehabilitation aimed to shift some care from inpatient settings to outpatient, home and community provision.

Members expressed concern about the reduction in inpatient bed numbers and the proposed closure of Cromwell House and Oak House.

It was recognised that some people experiencing acute psychiatric episodes would continue to require inpatient care.

On end-of-life care, the Board noted the projected growth in Worcestershire's older population and the need to coordinate emergency, hospital, rehabilitation, neighbourhood health, palliative and home based services.

RESOLVED that the Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee update be noted.

29/26 **FINANCE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP - REVIEW TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP**

Members received a report reviewing the Terms of Reference for the Finance and Budget Working Group for the 2026/27 municipal year.

It was agreed that the Working Group would appoint its own Chair.

It was also agreed that the Chair of the Audit, Standards and Governance Committee should not serve on the Working Group because of the potential conflict between scrutiny and audit responsibilities.

RESOLVED that the revised Terms of Reference for the Finance and Budget Working Group be approved.

30/26 **POLICE AND CRIME PANEL BRIEFING PAPER**

Councillor B. Kumar provided a summary of the latest Police and Crime Panel meeting held on 10th July 206.

Long term road safety performance had improved, with collisions down by nearly 40 per cent since 2016, although fatal and serious injuries remained a concern. Public consultation indicated opposition to police force mergers, particularly because of concerns about local visibility, priorities and community knowledge.

Crime was described as broadly stable or reducing in several categories, although domestic abuse, rape and robbery had increased. Detection rates were stronger for robbery, violence and rape but weaker for burglary, vehicle crime and domestic abuse. Emergency response and 101 performance remained below target, while 999 call handling was strong.

Members welcomed the detailed report but questioned whether collision data understated the true number of incidents because many slight or serious collisions were not reported. The Council's representative agreed to raise concerns about the completeness of collision data with West Mercia Police.

RESOLVED that the Police and Crime Panel Briefing Paper was noted.

31/26 **CABINET WORK PROGRAMME**

The Cabinet Work Programme was presented for Members' consideration.

No additional substantive matters were suggested.

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

32/26 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

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

The following discussions were raised during this item:

- That an agenda containing too many substantive items could weaken effective scrutiny. The Chairman and Vice Chairman agreed to review future agendas and arrange additional meetings where necessary.
- It was noted that the timing of further consideration of the Car Parking Strategy would need to be reviewed following the decision to establish a task group.
- Members discussed whether the Local Heritage List update needed to return at the next meeting, given the previous agreement for quarterly reporting. However, it was advised that this was in line with quarterly reporting.
- The heatwave and cooling hubs item had been deferred to November because relevant officers were unavailable due to training commitments. Members considered that the matter should remain on the programme.
- Fly tipping including discarded nitrous oxide canisters should be added to the work programme for future consideration.

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

33/26 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ACTION SHEET**

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

The Chairman requested an update on progress with live streaming of meetings, noting that bids had been expected by 26th August 2026. Officers agreed to seek a progress report from the relevant service area and report back to the Board.

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

34/26 **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.

35/26 **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
36	3

36/26 **TO CONFIRM THE ACCURACY OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 21ST JULY 2026 (INCLUDES EXEMPT MINUTES)**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 21st July 2026 were considered.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 21st July 2026 be agreed as a true and correct record.

The meeting closed at 9.01 p.m.

Chairman