Balsall & Berkswell Parish Councils Joint Merger Working Group

Terms of Reference (TOR)

1. Purpose

1.1. To consider how best to progress the merger of the two councils to enable a smooth transition to a single, unified Parish Council that represents the combined area of Balsall parish and Berkswell parish and its inhabitants.

1.2. To produce a merger project plan, deliver it and monitor progress.

1.3. Each parish council will be responsible for its own closure arrangements, these are outside the scope of the Working Group.

1.4. To provide recommendations to both councils on issues that need to be considered in order to achieve the best possible position for handover to the new Council.

1.5. To provide written reports on those issues, with options and recommendations to both councils.

2. Membership

2.1. Each council has nominated its representatives to the Working Group, that include Councillors and Clerks (Cllrs Drake, Macdonald, Shadbolt, Slatter and Clerks of both councils); if any are unavailable, they may nominate a substitute.

2.2. Quorum will be three, with at least one from each Council.

2.3. The Working Group members will elect its Chair.

3. Administration

3.1. Agendas and meeting notes minutes will be produced by the working Group Chair or nominated Committee member.

3.2. The Working Group may establish sub-groups to carry out specific tasks and provide recommendations in the form of a written report to be agreed by the JMWG, before being taken to both Councils for approval.

3.3. The Committee will agree the wording of a motion for approval by the Councils.

3.4. Meetings shall be held in a location incurring minimal cost to the Councils and shall not exceed 2 hrs in length. Meetings may be held in person or online. Working Group meetings are not required to be held in public.

3.5. Costs will be met by both parish councils on basis of Balsall PC two thirds and Berkswell one third for material items over £300.

4. Procedure

4.1. All meetings of the working group will be convened by the Chair. Councillors will conduct themselves in accordance with the Parish Councils Code of Conduct.

4.2. Advertising the time and place of a working group meeting is not required as the public do not have an automatic right to attend.

5. Key tasks

5.1. The key tasks for the Working Group include:

i. Liaise with Solihull MBC Legal and Electoral Services team on the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (Part 4) Regulations and order to
    a. understand the requirements, implications and timings
    b. clarify the respective roles of SMBC and the parish councils
    c. clarify how the transition arrangements will work to ensure staff and contractors are paid throughout the change.
ii. Develop, monitor and deliver a merger project plan that sets out key milestones and critical path issues.
iii. Identify, through an independent review, an appropriate organisation structure, systems and staffing that ensures the new council is fit for the 21st century.
iv. Prepare a draft budget for the new council for agreement by December 2026 at the latest.
v. Consider the HR and governance implications and advise on how these are to be managed
vi. Propose.gov.uk domain name for website and emails
vii. Propose branding
viii. Propose website content
ix. Develop a communications strategy to keep key stakeholders informed about the merger of the 2 councils and develop content.